

# Coalition for Fairness

*To achieve  
mental health and substance abuse parity  
in health insurance  
in the state of Wisconsin.*

## in Mental Health and Substance Abuse Insurance

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### “SHORT” HISTORY

#### of efforts to enact Mental Health & Substance Abuse Insurance Parity in Wisconsin

#### THE LAW

Under s.632.89, Stats, a group or blanket disability (health) insurance policy is required to provide coverage of nervous and mental disorders, alcoholism and other drug abuse problems. Total coverage for inpatient, outpatient, and transitional services for treatment of these conditions need not exceed \$7,000. There has been no increase in coverage since 1985.

#### ADVOCATING FOR PARITY

**1995** — NAMI Wisconsin members met with Senator Mary Panzer. Senator Panzer introduced a parity bill covering “biologically-based” mental illnesses (schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, clinical depression, panic disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder), stating that “Legislators don’t know much about mental illnesses. We have to start slowly and educate them.” Bill was heard but was not scheduled for committee vote.

**1997 Session** — Same bill introduced by Senator Panzer. Failed to be scheduled for committee action.

**1998** — Coalition for Fairness in Mental Health and Substance Abuse Insurance formed to advocate for comprehensive parity (to cover everything in DSM – IV R). Coalition represents over two million Wisconsin citizens including faith communities, families, consumers, professionals, civic leaders, labor unions, AARP, League of Women Voters and many other organizations.

**1999 Session** — Sen. Panzer introduced comprehensive parity bill. Failed to be scheduled for action.

**2001 Session** — Sen. Panzer again introduced comprehensive parity bill. Passed by committee on Health, Utilities, Veterans & Military Affairs (5-4). Passed (6-2) by committee on Finance. Passed (22-11) by full Senate. Failed to be scheduled for action in Assembly.

**2002** — Joint Legislative Council established Special Committee on Mental Health Parity.

**2003 Session** — Special Committee on Mental Health Parity recommended cost-of-living increase in coverage from \$7,000 to \$16,800 per year based on federal consumer price index for medical care costs. Joint Legislative Council introduced SB 72. Passed (5-4) by committee on Health, Children, Families, Aging & Long Term Care. Failed to be scheduled for Senate floor vote or Assembly action.

**2005 Session** — Identical bill (SB 128) introduced and heard by committee on Health, Children, Families, Aging & Long Term Care, Nov. 14. At Dec. 15 Executive Session, committee passed Substitute Amendment to phase in cost-of-living increase over a five-year period. Bill passed (5-0) as amended. Failed to be scheduled for Senate floor vote or Assembly action.

**2007 Session** — No bill has been introduced ... **YET!!**