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BEHAVIORAL HEALTH UPDATE: January 2015  
A Monthly Report for Members  
of the American Hospital Association [www.aha.org](http://www.aha.org) and the  
National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems, [www.naphs.org](http://www.naphs.org)

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1. CDC reports most Americans with depression are not getting treatment.
2. SAMHSA reports 9.3 million Americans had serious thoughts of suicide in the past year.
3. CDC reports drug-overdose deaths doubled from 1999 to 2012.
4. 2014 Monitoring the Future Survey shows declines in youth drug and alcohol use.
5. Labor Department updates materials to assist health plans determine parity compliance.
6. 60 Minutes airs story on medical necessity denials.
7. Report examines precursors to 2012 Newtown shooting.
8. AHA President/CEO Rich Umbdenstock to retire at end of 2015.
9. NAMI issues report on state mental health legislation in 2014.
10. Mental Health America's state-ranking report finds "disparity often trumps parity."
11. VA exempting mental health peer support services from copayments.
12. Researchers call for more prescriber education on first-episode psychoses.
13. Mental and addictive disorders are USPSTF's top priority for further research to improve the health of children and adolescents.
14. Two statewide grant programs aim to support consumer- and family-driven organizations.
15. Guide offers healthcare facilities help in preparing for potential active-shooter incidents.
16. National Drug Facts Week is January 26 – February 1; Resources to help you reach out to teens.
17. AHA and NAPHS annual meetings to be held in DC this spring.

**1. CDC REPORTS MOST AMERICANS WITH DEPRESSION ARE NOT GETTING**

**TREATMENT.** Between 2009 and 2012, 7.6% of Americans aged 12 and over had depression (defined as having moderate or severe depressive symptoms in the past two weeks), according to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [data brief](#) from the National Center for Health Statistics. Yet only 35% of those with severe depressive symptoms and 20% of those with moderate depression reported seeing a mental health professional in the past year. Nearly 90% of persons with severe depressive symptoms reported difficulty with work, home, or social activities related to their symptoms, the CDC found.

**2. AN ESTIMATED 9.3 MILLION AMERICANS HAD SERIOUS THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE IN THE PAST YEAR, SAMHSA REPORTS.**

Some 9.3 million American adults (or 3.9%) had serious thoughts of suicide in the past year, according to a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) report titled [Results from the 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Mental Health Findings](#). Researchers found 2.7 million adults (1.1%) made suicide plans, and 1.3 million (0.6%) attempted suicide. Overall, SAMHSA reported that 43.8 million adults age 18 or older (or nearly one in five) experienced a diagnosable mental illness in 2013. Some 10 million adults experienced a serious mental illness, and 15.7 million adults experienced a major depressive episode in 2013. In the same year, major depressive episodes affected approximately one in ten (2.6 million) youth between the ages of 12 to 17. But only 38.1% of youths experiencing a past-year major depressive episode received treatment for depression. "It is a serious issue that millions of Americans are needlessly affected by mental illness when they can get effective treatment to restore their well-being," [said](#) SAMHSA Administrator Pamela S. Hyde. "Now more than ever, people can get the help they need to recover from mental disorders and live full, active lives – they just need to take the first step and seek help."

**3. CDC REPORTS DRUG-OVERDOSE DEATHS DOUBLED FROM 1999 TO 2012.** In 2012, there were 41,502 drug-overdose deaths in the United States, of which 16,007 involved opioid analgesics and 5,925 involved heroin, according to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Health E-Stat](#) looking at data from the CDC's National Vital Statistics System. From 1999 through 2012, overdose deaths nationwide more than doubled (from 6.1 per 100,000 population in 1999 to 13.1 in 2012), said the CDC [report](#). In the same time period, overdose deaths involving heroin nearly tripled (from 0.7 deaths per 100,000 in 1999 to 1.9 in 2012).

**4. 2014 MONITORING THE FUTURE SURVEY SHOWS DECLINES IN YOUTH DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE.** Alcohol use and prescription pain reliever misuse have declined since 2013, according to results of the [2014 Monitoring the Future Survey](#). Conducted by the University of Michigan, the annual survey tracks drug use and attitudes among 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students. The latest survey reports that all measures of alcohol drinking (past-month, past-year, lifetime, daily, and 5 or more drinks in a row in the last two weeks) were significantly lower than five years ago, and all levels are at an all-time low since 1991. Marijuana use rates did not increase in 2014, and, among 10<sup>th</sup> graders, both past-year and daily marijuana use declined by 8% and 15%, respectively. Past-year use of synthetic marijuana was down among 12<sup>th</sup> graders (from 11.4% in 2011 to 5.8% in 2014). See a University of Michigan [news release](#) for details.

**5. LABOR DEPARTMENT UPDATES MATERIALS TO ASSIST HEALTH PLANS DETERMINE PARITY COMPLIANCE.** The Department of Labor's (DOL) Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA) has published an [Updated Compliance Assistance Guide - Health Benefits Coverage Under Federal Law](#) that includes updates to two key sections related to mental health parity and the *Affordable Care Act*. The first is an updated [Self Compliance Tool](#) intended to help group health plans, plan sponsors, plan administrators, health insurance issuers, and other parties determine whether a group health plan is in compliance with some of the provisions of Part 7 of ERISA. The self-compliance tool includes updated sections on mental health parity. The second section is a set of [Mental Health Parity Provisions Questions and Answers](#), which are also included in the updated Compliance Assistance Guide.

**6. 60 MINUTES AIRS STORY ON MEDICAL NECESSITY DENIALS.** On December 14, 2014, CBS-TV's 60 Minutes aired a segment titled "[Denied](#)" about the misuse of "medical necessity" by insurance companies. At the two-year anniversary of the Sandy Hook tragedy, correspondent Scott Pelley noted that "because of recurring tragedies and an epidemic of suicides, we've been investigating the battles that parents fight for psychiatric care. We found that the vast majority of claims are routine but the insurance industry aggressively reviews the cost of chronic cases. Long-term care is often denied by insurance company doctors who never see the patient. As a result, some seriously ill patients are discharged from hospitals over the objections of psychiatrists who warn that someone may die." In response to the report, former Rep. Patrick Kennedy in a [Kennedy Forum press release](#) and in a [CBS-TV "This Morning" interview](#) called on the federal government "to do two things required of them:" 1) provide additional guidance on insurance company disclosures and transparency; and 2) bring its own programs (such as Medicaid) into compliance with the parity law.

**7. REPORT EXAMINES PRECURSORS TO 2012 NEWTOWN SHOOTING.** A [report](#) from the Connecticut Office of the Child Advocate looks at the circumstances that pre-dated the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT. The agency had been charged with developing any recommendations for public health system improvement that could be gleaned from a review of the circumstances that led to the violence. Among other things, the report recommends more thorough mental health screenings; better coordination and exchange of information among medical, community, and educational providers; and more support for families with children facing mental health issues.

**8. AHA PRESIDENT/CEO RICH UMBDENSTOCK TO RETIRE AT END OF 2015.** American Hospital Association (AHA) President and CEO Rich Umbdenstock has [announced](#) his plans to retire at the end of 2015. The AHA Board has engaged Korn Ferry to conduct a search, with AHA's 2015 Chair-Elect Jim Skogsbergh (who is President/CEO of Advocate Health Care) chairing the search committee. AHA hopes to have a successor in place by summer.

**9. NAMI ISSUES REPORT ON STATE MENTAL HEALTH LEGISLATION IN 2014.** A National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) report on [State Mental Health Legislation 2014](#) examines the pace of mental health reform. "The report stands in contrast to one issued in 2013 which described a dramatic response by many states following the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, on December 14, 2012," notes a [NAMI news release](#). From 2009 to 2012, NAMI reported that states cut mental health budgets by \$4.35 billion. Thirty-six states and the District of Columbia began to restore funding in 2013 in the wake of heightened public awareness of mental health needs. In 2014 only 29 states and the District of Columbia increased funding for mental health services. While progress was made in some states, the report says that "much of the legislation felt like tinkering at the edges." In the report, NAMI notes that "the time for talk is past. Action is needed to address a major American crisis. By highlighting themes, trends and effective practices in state legislation, this report is intended to inform NAMI leaders, their allies and state policymakers seeking to make mental health services available to all who need them." Appendices include summaries of enacted legislation arranged by topic, with both effective practices and potentially harmful legislation flagged

**10. MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA'S STATE-RANKING REPORT FINDS "DISPARITY OFTEN TRUMPS PARITY."** A new report from Mental Health America (MHA) titled [Parity or Disparity: The State of Mental Health in America 2015](#) provides a state-by-state snapshot of mental health status in America. The report "indicates the country has a long way to go to adequately address critical mental health care needs," [says](#) MHA President and CEO Paul Gionfriddo. "When we think about cancer, heart disease, or diabetes, we don't wait years to treat them," he said, "we start before Stage 4—we begin with prevention. So why don't we do the same for individuals who are dealing with potentially serious mental illness? We need to address these symptoms early, identify the underlying disease, and plan an appropriate course of action on a path towards overall health."

**11. VA EXEMPTING MENTAL HEALTH PEER SUPPORT SERVICES FROM COPAYMENTS.** The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has issued a [direct final rule](#) exempting mental health peer support services from copayments. "This removes a barrier that may have previously discouraged veterans from choosing to use mental health peer support services as a viable care option," the regulation states. "VA believes that mental health peer support services are a valuable resource for veterans with mental health conditions and wants to ensure that veterans take full advantage of all resources available to them." This final rule is effective January 27, 2015, without further notice, "unless VA receives an adverse comment by January 27, 2015."

**12. RESEARCHERS CALL FOR MORE PRESCRIBER EDUCATION ON FIRST-EPIISODE PSYCHOSES.** Many patients with first-episode psychosis receive medications that do not comply with recommended [guidelines](#) for first-episode treatment, according to research published online December 4 ahead of print in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*. See an [abstract](#) of the study. Current guidelines emphasize low doses of antipsychotic drugs and strategies for minimizing the side effects that might contribute to patients stopping their medication, notes a [news release](#) from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), which funded the study. Almost 40% of people with first-episode psychosis in community mental health clinics across the country might benefit from medication treatment changes, researchers say. Better medication treatment early in the illness, particularly strategies that minimize uncomfortable side effects, may lead to better results for patients. To improve

prescription practices, the authors recommend additional education for those prescribing medication for patients with first-episode psychosis. The study is among the first of several to report results from the [Recovery After an Initial Schizophrenia Episode](#) (RAISE) project developed by NIMH.

**13. MENTAL AND ADDICTIVE DISORDERS ARE USPSTF’S TOP PRIORITY FOR FURTHER RESEARCH TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND**

**ADOLESCENTS.** “Mental health conditions and substance use” is the top-priority evidence gap related to the care of children and adolescents, according to the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force’s (USPSTF) fourth [report to Congress](#). The third priority for further study is “behavior and development.” According to the USPSTF, “more research in these areas would result in important new knowledge that may improve the health and health care of young Americans, with lasting benefits through adulthood.”

**14. TWO STATEWIDE GRANT PROGRAMS AIM TO SUPPORT CONSUMER- AND FAMILY-DRIVEN ORGANIZATIONS.**

February 2 is the deadline for applying for two new grants (each offering up to \$95,000 per year) from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The [Statewide Consumer Network Program](#) is open to consumer-run and -controlled organizations. The program aims to 1) increase consumer participation, voice, and empowerment statewide; 2) emphasize and build consumer leadership within organizations and in the community; and 3) promote activities related to partnership development, peer support, service needs related to gender, training and skills development, trauma-informed peer support, integrated care and wellness, and/or health reform as part of the recovery process for consumers. The [Statewide Family Network Program](#) is open to family-controlled organizations. “SAMHSA is limiting eligibility to family-controlled organizations to strengthen the capacity of families with children who have serious emotional disturbance to act as agents of transformation in influencing the type and amount of services provided to them and their children and to ensure their mental health care is family-driven and youth-guided,” the call for applicants notes.

**15. GUIDE OFFERS HEALTHCARE FACILITIES HELP IN PREPARING FOR POTENTIAL ACTIVE-SHOOTER INCIDENTS.**

The Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) has released a [guide](#) to encourage healthcare facilities to consider how to better prepare for an active-shooter incident. “Though hospitals and many other healthcare facilities have emergency operations plans (EOPs), this document provides emergency planners, disaster committees, executive leadership, and others involved in emergency operations planning with detailed discussions of unique issues faced in an HCF,” the introduction notes. The document also includes discussions on related topics, including information sharing, psychological first aid, and law enforcement/security. It was developed with assistance from ASPR’s Divisions of Health System Policy and Tactical Programs, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Healthcare and Public Health Sector Coordinating Council.

**16. NATIONAL DRUG FACTS WEEK IS JANUARY 26 – FEBRUARY 1; RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU REACH OUT TO TEENS.**

The National Institute on Drug Abuse’s (NIDA’s) 5<sup>th</sup> [National Drug Facts Week](#) will be held January 26 through February 1. The week is designed to help teens “shatter persistent myths about drug use and addiction.” NIDA offers an [online toolkit](#) that advises teens and their adult advisors how to create an event, publicize it, find an expert, and obtain scientific information on drugs. Event holders who [register online](#) will receive free booklets with science-based facts about drugs. NIDA is also offering [interactive tools](#) that can be projected on large screens at events or used with mobile devices.

17. **AHA AND NAPHS ANNUAL MEETINGS TO BE HELD IN DC THIS SPRING.** Plan now to attend two separate meetings this spring in Washington, DC:

The **National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems'** 2015 annual meeting will be held **March 16-18** at the Mandarin Oriental Washington DC. Speakers include Rep. Tim Murphy (R-PA), former CMS Administrator Thomas Scully, Beacon Health Strategies CEO Timothy Murphy, PriceWaterhouseCoopers Health Industries Principal Michael Thompson, NAMI Executive Director Mary Giliberti, and others. For details on "Behavioral Healthcare Leadership in Action," go to [www.naphs.org/annual-meeting/home](http://www.naphs.org/annual-meeting/home) or call 202/393-6700, ext. 105.

The **American Hospital Association's** 2015 annual membership meeting will be held **May 3-6** at The Hilton Hotel in Washington, DC. For details, go to [www.aha.org](http://www.aha.org).

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