

Federally Qualified

Behavioral Health Centers

NATIONAL COUNCIL
FOR COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE

In recognition of the need to address the high numbers of uninsured and underinsured individuals in the U.S., Congress is likely to include a sizeable coverage expansion initiative in healthcare reform legislation. There is broad acknowledgement that the healthcare system must be strengthened to ensure it has the infrastructure to respond to increased demand for services and the need for greater provider accountability for health outcomes.

Given evidence showing the number of uninsured with mental health and substance use problems and current barriers to accessing community behavioral health services, the **National Council urges Congress to authorize the creation of Federally Qualified Behavioral Health Centers (FQBHCs)**. These entities would receive **reimbursement for the costs of providing services** to children and adults with mental health and substance use problems **while meeting clearly defined national standards** in order to receive such reimbursement and meet increased demand for services.

Data from a national survey by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reveal that more than one in four adult uninsured Americans have a mental illness, substance use disorder, or co-occurring disorder.ⁱ In addition, a recent study found that 67% of primary care physicians had trouble referring clients to outpatient mental health treatment for several reasons, including a shortage of mental health providers and inadequate coverage of services.ⁱⁱ

FEDERALLY QUALIFIED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CENTERS

In order to address increased demand for community mental health and addiction services as a result of coverage expansion, the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare and the 1,600 community mental health and addiction provider agencies it represents seek Congressional authorization for the proposed definition of an FQBHC. Congressional authorization would:

- > > Establish federal status for community behavioral health organizations that volunteer to meet the standards of an FQBHC.
- > > Provide a definition for such an entity that clearly identifies treatment objectives and updates the minimum core services required.
- > > Create nationwide minimum reimbursement for community-based mental healthcare and substance abuse services — established at the federal level — that reflects the cost of actually delivering those same services.
- > > Establish clearly defined national standards for this entity.

ⁱ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Results from the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings. Office of Applied Studies. NSDUH Series H-32, DHHS Publication Number SMA 07-4293. 2007

ⁱⁱ Cunningham, P.J. Beyond Parity: Primary Care Physicians' Perspectives on Access to Mental Health Care. Health Affairs. 2009. Vol. 28



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authorization of Federally
Qualified Behavioral Health
Centers