

San Mateo County Mental Health Services Division
**Summary Information for Consumers Regarding
California's Mental Health "Parity" Law**

- California's law, as of July 1, 2000, requires most health plans to provide diagnosis and medically necessary treatment of severe mental illnesses of a person of any age, and severe emotional disturbance of a child.
- Benefits must include: outpatient services, psychiatric inpatient services, partial hospitalization, and prescription medications.
- Covered diagnoses include:
 - Schizophrenia
 - Schizoaffective disorder
 - Bipolar disorder
 - Major depressive disorder
 - Panic disorder
 - Obsessive compulsive disorder
 - Pervasive developmental disorder or autism
 - Anorexia nervosa
 - Bulimia nervosa
- Severe emotional disturbance is defined to be one or more mental disorders, other than substance abuse or developmental disorders, that result in behavior inappropriate to the child's age according to expected developmental norms and other criteria.
- There is a State of California agency that can help health plan members resolve complaints about access to mental health treatment through their health plans:

State Department of Managed Care
Consumer Helpline phone numbers:
(888) HMO-2219 (toll-free); TDD (877) 688-9891
www.hmohelp.ca.gov

The Helpline staff can explain the parity law more specifically in light of your situation and can help you resolve problems in getting mental health treatment that you are eligible for through your health plan. They expect you to use your health plan's problem resolution/complaint process before you file a formal complaint with their department.