



Breaking the Silence: Recognizing Mental Health Benefits in the Battle Against Eating Disorders

Filed in [Wages and Benefits](#), [Health and Retirement Benefits](#) • By: [Lisa M. Gomez](#) • February 29, 2024

President Biden proclaimed that this week, National Eating Disorders Awareness Week, is an essential time to shed light on this serious health issue that affects nearly 1 in 10 individuals across America. Eating disorders not only impact your physical health but also your emotional and psychological well-being. As we raise awareness about this issue, it's crucial to recognize that eating disorders are mental health conditions and therefore treatment of an eating disorder is a mental health benefit covered by mental health parity laws.

Mental health parity generally requires that mental health and substance use disorder benefits are provided in a similar way as medical and surgical benefits in group health plans. This means that when you seek treatment for eating disorders, such as therapy, medications, nutritional counseling, or residential treatment programs, you should not face barriers or roadblocks that don't exist for medical treatments. For example, if a health plan provides coverage for nutritional counseling for someone with diabetes, it cannot have a blanket exclusion for coverage of nutritional counseling for those with eating disorders. Understanding your rights under the law is important so you and your family can receive the mental health benefits and services you are entitled to.

The Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA) offers resources to help you learn about your mental health benefits and your rights, including the publication "[Understanding Your Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Benefits](#)". This resource provides information on using mental health services covered by your job-based health plan. For parents, family members or other caregivers for someone in need of or using mental health or substance use disorder benefits, "[Understanding Parity: A Guide to Resources for Families and Caregivers](#)," provides information and tools necessary to secure behavioral health services for their loved ones.

EBSA also has benefits advisors who can answer your questions and assist with issues with your plan. You can [reach benefits advisors online](#) or by calling 1-866-444-3272. As we observe National Eating Disorders Awareness Week, let's spread awareness of treatments and rights to these important mental health benefits so we can make sure everyone gets the health care they need.

For those in need of support, [visit samhsa.gov/find-support](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-support) or call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Helpline at 1-800-662-4357 for confidential, free, 24/7 information and referral services. Additionally, if you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, immediate help is available by calling or texting 988, the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, for confidential support and assistance.

Lisa M. Gomez is the assistant secretary of the Employee Benefits Security Administration

Tags: [Employee Benefits Security Administration](#), [health benefits](#)



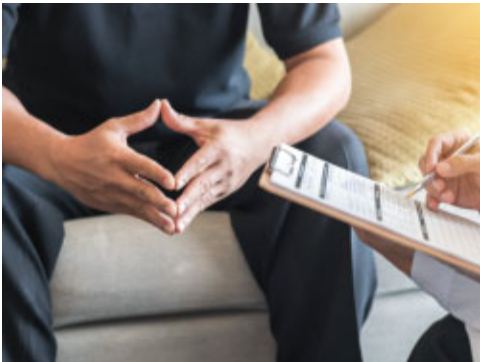
SHARE THIS:

[How OCIO is Using AI to Enrich \(Not Replace\) Jobs](#)

[Labor Relations Consultants: Fill Out Form LM-20 Correctly](#)

RELATED POSTS

MORE FROM AUTHOR



[Parity Means Better Coverage for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder](#)



[A Proposed Rule to Make Mental Health Parity a Reality](#)

[Scroll to top ↑](#)

Stay Connected! Sign up to receive Department of Labor updates.

Email Address

SUBSCRIBE

[Agencies](#)

[Forms](#)

[Guidance Search](#)

[FAQ](#)

[About DOL](#)

[News](#)

[Contact Us](#)

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

[White House](#)

Submit Feedback

[Benefits.gov](#)

[Coronavirus Resources](#)

[Disaster Recovery Assistance](#)

[DisasterAssistance.gov](#)

[USA.gov](#)

[Notification of EEO Violations](#)

[No Fear Act Data](#)

[U.S. Office of Special Counsel](#)

LABOR DEPARTMENT

[About DOL](#)

[Guidance Search](#)

[Español](#)

[Office of Inspector General](#)

[Subscribe to the DOL Newsletter](#)

[Read the DOL Newsletter](#)

[Emergency Accountability Status Link](#)

[A to Z Index](#)

ABOUT THE SITE

[Freedom of Information Act](#)

[Disclaimers](#)

[Plug-Ins Used on DOL.gov](#)

[Accessibility Statement](#)



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

200 Constitution Ave NW

Washington, DC 20210

[1-866-4-USA-DOL](tel:18664USA-DOL)

[1-866-487-2365](tel:18664872365)

www.dol.gov

Connect With DOL



[Site Map](#) |

[Important Website Notices](#) |

[Privacy & Security Statement](#)