

# American Academy of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

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**Contact:** Macon Morehouse, 202-724-3303, [mmorehouse@aap.org](mailto:mmorehouse@aap.org)

Priscilla Ring, 202-724-3304, [pring@aap.org](mailto:pring@aap.org)

## **Press Statement**

**On**

### **House Passage of Mental Health Parity Legislation**

**by Renée R. Jenkins, MD, FAAP, president, American Academy of Pediatrics**

“Today’s passage of the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act of 2007 (H.R. 1424) by a broad bipartisan majority in the U.S. House of Representatives is a critical first step towards improving mental health care for all Americans, especially children and adolescents.

“An estimated 13 million American children and adolescents require mental health and substance abuse treatment services. Unfortunately, as the number of children needing mental health treatment increases, access to this care continues to erode. This remains true despite evidence that timely and adequate access to mental health and substance abuse treatment is associated with positive impacts on child behavior, brain development, parental health, and reductions in juvenile violence and detention.

“If mental health parity legislation becomes law, families seeking treatment for their children could no longer be charged more for mental health and substance abuse treatment than for other medical costs in terms of co-payments, deductibles, out-of-pocket expenses, covered hospital stays or outpatient hospital visits.

“Congress is taking a stand for America’s families by voting ‘yes’ on equal coverage for both physical *and* mental health services. The nation’s pediatricians urge the U.S. House and Senate to work together to resolve the differences in their bills and pass the strongest possible mental health parity legislation this year. We must provide children and adolescents access to the care and treatment they need and deserve.”

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*The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults.*