

# Strengthen Kids' Mental Health Now Act (H.R. 7236)

## Section-by-Section Summary

Introduced by Reps. Anna Eshoo, D-Calif., Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., and Lisa Blunt Rochester, D-Del.

**Sec. 1: Short Title** – [H.R. 7236, Strengthen Kids' Mental Health Now Act](#)

**Sec. 2: Table of Contents**

**Sec. 3: Payment Parity for Pediatric Behavioral Health Services**

- Raises Medicaid reimbursement for pediatric mental health services to match Medicare levels for similar services, providing direct targeted support to pediatric mental health practitioners. If a gap exists between Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement for the service, it would be covered by a 100% federal matching rate.
- Provides a comprehensive list of pediatric mental health services to be included and allows for additional behavioral health services as determined by the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS).

**Sec. 4: Guidance to States on Supporting Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Health Services, and on the Availability of Telehealth Under Medicaid**

- Directs the Secretary of HHS to issue guidance to states on how to expand pediatric mental, emotional and behavioral health services under state Medicaid plans, including best practices for improving access in underserved communities and provider recruitment and retention.
- Requires the Secretary of HHS to issue guidance to states on best practices to enhance the availability of telehealth services under state plans.

**Sec. 5: Ensuring Children Receive Timely Access to Care**

- Directs the Secretary of HHS to provide guidance to states on existing flexibilities for hospitals and other providers to enhance their capacity to provide pediatric crisis care for children experiencing mental health crises or otherwise in need of intensive mental, emotional or behavioral health services.
- Directs HHS to deliver a report to Congress on regulatory and legal barriers which inhibit the ability of children's hospitals and other providers across the continuum of care to repurpose space, beds and staff to meet pediatric behavioral health needs in their communities and to identify solutions that enhance flexibility for providers to expand care capacity.
- Requires the Secretary of HHS to conduct annual reviews of the implementation of Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) with regards to pediatric mental and behavioral health services. The report must include identified gaps and deficiencies in meeting federal EPSDT requirements and best practices for ensuring comprehensive coverage of behavioral health services, including for children without a diagnosed mental health disorder.

**Sec. 6: Programs to Support Pediatric Behavioral Health Care**

- **Grant Program to Support Pediatric Behavioral Healthcare Integration and Coordination:** Authorizes \$500 million each year for five years for a new Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) program which will fund grants to eligible health care providers, hospitals and clinics to engage in activities to enhance the delivery of community-based mental and behavioral health services for children and adolescents, and to support pediatric behavioral health care integration and coordination.

- **Pediatric Behavioral Health Workforce Training Grant Program:** Authorizes \$100 million each year for five years for a new HRSA program focused on developing and expanding the pediatric mental health workforce. Grants will support training to enhance the skills of the existing pediatric health care workforce and support the recruitment, training and retention of a robust, diverse pediatric mental health workforce across mental health professions.

**Sec. 7: Increasing Federal Investment in Pediatric Behavioral Health Services**

- Authorizes \$2 billion each year for five years for a new HRSA grant program to develop and strengthen critical pediatric mental health infrastructure and address gaps in the continuum of care for children, including through the construction of new sites of care, modernization of existing facilities, investment in technology to facilitate telehealth and expanded capacity to deliver intermediate levels of care, such as intensive outpatient services, partial hospitalization programs and day programs.