



October 9, 2012

Secretary Dennis Smith
1 W Wilson St
Madison WI 53703

Dear Secretary Smith:

The Wisconsin Psychiatric Association is pleased to support the Mental Health Care Coordination and HIPAA Harmonization Bill. The bill will enable psychiatrists to better coordinate their patient's care with other physicians and health care professionals, leading to better, more holistic care for individuals with mental health needs.

Current Wisconsin mental health laws that were developed prior to the Federal HIPAA privacy and security laws place special restrictions on communications between a patient's treating psychiatrist and other physicians and providers that provide care to the patient. While the current law served an important purpose in a pre-HIPAA and siloed-model of mental health care, current law is now doing more harm than good by making it more difficult for psychiatrists to work together in a modern integrated care environment with other treating physicians and providers to provide more coordinated, holistic treatment for individuals with mental health needs.

The Mental Health Care Coordination and HIPAA Harmonization Bill would update Wisconsin law to be consistent with modern integrated medicine approaches to individuals with mental health needs, while maintaining important HIPAA protections, such as restrictions on the disclosure of psychotherapy notes, and permitting, but not requiring, the disclosure of health information for clinical purposes.

The Wisconsin Psychiatric Association is dedicated to working to improve the treatment, rehabilitation, and care of individuals with mental illness, to foster the cooperation of all who are concerned with the medical, psychological, social and legal aspects of mental health and illness, and to promote the best interests of patients and those actually or potentially making use of mental health services.

The mission of the WPA is to advocate for service to patients, education, research, and the welfare of its members. Based on our understanding of biological, psychological, and social influences, psychiatrists are alone among physicians and mental health professionals in our unique ability to assess, diagnose, and treat patients using a comprehensive biopsychosocial framework. By virtue of this expertise, psychiatrists are equipped to help train, supervise, and collaborate with primary care physicians and other mental health professionals to accomplish the provision of integrated high quality biopsychosocial care.

Sincerely,

Joseph B. Layde, MD, JD
President of Wisconsin Psychiatric Association