



**For Immediate Release:**

Sunday, Nov. 8, 2009

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**House Health Care Reform Bill Includes \$30 Million Program  
for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Screening**

**TeenScreen National Center Commends Congressional Leadership  
for Inclusion of Mental Health Checkups**

NEW YORK – The House of Representatives on Saturday night passed its health care reform bill, the Affordable Health Care for America Act (H.R. 3962) by a vote of 220-215. The TeenScreen National Center for Mental Health Checkups commends this historic achievement and applauds the House's work to include a new \$30 million program for mental health and substance use screening in primary care settings. The provision, championed by Congressman Paul Tonko, D-N.Y., and Congressman Patrick Kennedy, D-R.I., is a major advance for the early detection and treatment of mental disorders.

Created under the Public Health Service Act, the new program will allow nonprofit and governmental entities to receive grants to provide mental health and substance use screening, intervention, referral and treatment in primary care settings. Funding would begin in 2011. Additional funds could be appropriated as necessary through 2015.

"We are very pleased to see Congress make mental health checkups in primary care a priority by including this new program in the House's health care reform bill. We applaud Congress' commitment to early detection of mental illness, especially for our nation's young people," said Laurie Flynn, executive director of the TeenScreen National Center for Mental Health Checkups at Columbia University. "Mental health screening is instrumental in identifying adolescents who are at risk for mental illness or suicide, especially since 50 percent of all lifetime mental health disorders start by age 14 and most illnesses are not diagnosed for 10 years after the first symptoms appear. Offering checkups in primary care and schools can help our teens who are suffering get the help they need much sooner."

"We at the TeenScreen National Center thank Congressmen Tonko and Kennedy for their leadership on mental health screening in primary care. We are certain that this support will help families across our entire nation and through increased access to screening in primary care young lives can be saved," Flynn said. "In addition to recent federal parity legislation, this program is an encouraging move toward mainstreaming mental health as a recognized and regular part of overall health care. We urge the U.S. Senate to include this program to its health reform package to ensure it will become part of the final bill enacted into law."

This screening program was included in the bill Nov. 5 after submission by Congressmen Tonko and Kennedy.

The TeenScreen Primary Care initiative equips primary care providers with screening tools, best practices for coding and reimbursement, and tips for making referrals to mental health practitioners. For more information, visit: <http://www.teenscreen.org/teenscreen-primary-care>.

**The TeenScreen National Center for Mental Health Checkups at Columbia University's** mission is to expand and improve early detection of mental illness by mainstreaming mental health checkups as a routine procedure in adolescent health care, schools and other youth-serving settings. The National Center offers youth mental health checkups through two major national efforts, TeenScreen Primary Care and TeenScreen Schools and Communities. Voluntary screening is provided in more than 700 sites in 43 states through the National Center's efforts. The National Center is an affiliate of the Columbia University Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: [www.teenscreen.org](http://www.teenscreen.org).