Blue Cross and BCN support outpatient behavioral health treatment delivered via telemedicine

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many members who need treatment for mental health or substance use disorders can’t safely be accommodated in inpatient settings. In addition, many members can’t participate in partial hospital program, or PHP, and intensive outpatient program, or IOP, services in person due to the shelter-in-place requirements.

To address these concerns, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network support providers:

- Moving patients from inpatient to outpatient treatment protocols when medically appropriate
- Offering PHP and IOP treatment via telemedicine when possible

As a result, the following services are now payable when delivered via telemedicine (audiovisual visits or telephone-only visits):

- **Mental health disorders:** Intensive outpatient program, or IOP, and partial hospital program, or PHP, are now payable via telemedicine for Blue Cross’ PPO, Medicare Plus Blue℠ PPO, BCN HMO℠ and BCN Advantage℠ members who have the benefit.

- **Substance use disorders.**
  - IOP is now payable via telemedicine for Blue Cross’ PPO, Medicare Plus Blue, BCN HMO and BCN Advantage members who have the benefit.
  - PHP is now payable via telemedicine for Medicare Plus Blue, BCN HMO and BCN Advantage members and for some Blue Cross’ PPO plans that have the benefit.

Note: These services aren’t payable for Blue Cross or BCN members covered by Medicare supplement plans.

Providers should use web-DENIS to check each member’s benefits related to the treatment of substance use and mental health disorders.

We’re interested in helping providers transition to providing these services via telemedicine. Here’s what we’re doing:

- Developing resources to help you move patients to outpatient care as soon as it is medically appropriate. One such resource is the document [Outpatient detoxification and follow-up care protocols](#). In this document, we identify:
Risks and benefits for providers to consider in determining whether a patient’s detoxification can be managed on an outpatient basis

Resources that offer treatment algorithms applicable to the treatment of substance use disorders

How post-detoxification follow-up care can be provided via telemedicine

Reconfiguring our systems to reimburse professional and facility / hospital providers for PHP and IOP services delivered via telemedicine.

Note: For dates of service on or after April 16, 2020, and until we’ve reconfigured our systems, continue billing for PHP or IOP services as you normally would, using standard billing processes and the appropriate revenue code. In the next few weeks, we’ll reconfigure our systems to process these claims with a code specific to telemedicine. Watch for web-DENIS messages with additional updates.

We encourage providers to work with us in making these service delivery changes as quickly as possible, so members can access critically needed behavioral health services.

Note that there are no changes to the initial authorization or continuing stay review requirements for these services. You should continue to follow the normal processes.

For more information, see the Telehealth for behavioral health providers document, which is available on our public website at bcbsm.com/coronavirus and through Provider Secured Services.

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