



We are **AHA**.

Behavioral health providers that are members of the American Hospital Association add their voice and influence to the nation's leading advocate for hospitals and health systems. The AHA provides its behavioral health members with valuable benefits, including **advocacy, resources and initiatives designed to improve access to and strengthen the delivery of affordable, high-quality behavioral health care.**

Advocacy



We are working with Congress and the Administration to enact policies to support behavioral health hospitals and service lines, and to solidify a policy environment that protects access to care, advances innovation and invests in behavioral health treatment.

Results

Legislative

The House passed **AHA-supported** legislation to reauthorize key SUPPORT Act programs for patients with substance use disorders (SUD) and permanently extend required Medicaid coverage for medication-assisted treatments. A Senate Committee advanced its own SUPPORT Act reauthorization bill and AHA **voiced support** for provisions to reauthorize grants to help states agencies to finalize regulations for prescribing controlled substances over telemedicine and more. The Better Mental Health Care, Lower-Cost Drugs, and Extenders Act advanced in the Senate Finance Committee and includes **AHA-supported provisions** such as increasing payment rates for behavioral health integration with primary care.

Regulatory

Clarification on Ligature Risk Requirements

- After years of urging, **AHA is pleased** CMS will now allow hospitals to use clinical evidence and nationally recognized standards to assess and manage risk within their facilities, rather than leaving evaluation of what is safe up to the arbitrary judgment of surveyors.

CMS Physician Fee Schedule CY 2024 Final Rule

- Mental Health Counselors (MHCs) and Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) **will now be covered** under Medicare Part B for behavioral health integration services, can serve as distant site practitioners for remote services, and can bill for Health Behavior Assessment and Intervention services.

- CMS will extend payment for telehealth care furnished in Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) and Federally Qualified Health Clinics (FQHCs) and delay in-person visit requirements for remote mental health services furnished by providers through CY 2024.
- CMS will increase the valuation for timed behavioral health services by 19.1% and create billing for complex psychotherapy.

CMS CY 2024 Final Rule for Hospital Outpatient & Ambulatory Surgical Centers

- The rule finalized requirements for hospitals, RHCs, and FQHCs under Medicare for the coverage of Intensive Outpatient Services (IOP) services, beginning Jan. 1, 2024, and extends IOP coverage to opioid treatment programs and CMHCs.
- CMS adopted an additional, untimed code describing remote group psychotherapy and finalized technical refinements to allow for multiple units to be billed on the same day.
- CMS delayed the requirements for an in-person visit within six months prior to the first remote mental health service and within 12 months after each remote service until Jan. 1, 2025. More positive changes are detailed in [AHA's Special Bulletin](#).

CMS CY 2024 Medicare Advantage Rule

- The rule adds behavioral health providers to MA plans' required list of adequate networks of "appropriate providers."
- Additionally, the rule requires plans to include an adequate supply of clinical psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, and prescribers of medication for opioid use disorders.
- The rule also requires MA organizations to ensure that MA enrollees receive medically necessary behavioral health services in a medical emergency without prior authorization. More positive changes are detailed in [AHA's Special Bulletin](#).

Influencing the Conversation

Throughout 2023, AHA worked closely with the Administration, urging them to:

- Work with Congress **to invest in** the behavioral health workforce
- **Enact measures** to ensure vigorous enforcement of mental health and substance use disorder parity laws
- Permanently extend scope of practice and **telehealth flexibilities** granted during the PHE
- Clarify that **exceptions to in-person** requirements can be made for team-based care delivery
- **Require** that mental health and SUD providers be differentiated and explicitly listed as categories of licensed, accredited, or certified professionals accessible under qualified health plans
- **Update the statutory framework** to allow for meaningful integration of SUD and physical health care and to resolve the statutory conflicts that prevent full alignment of Part 2 with the HIPAA requirements
- Explicitly **list the following** as essential benefit services: individual psychotherapy, group therapy, partial hospitalization services, IOP, crisis transport and stabilization, and peer support and recovery.

Sharing Solutions & Innovations from the Field



In addition to a daily news bulletin and advocacy alerts on key issues, AHA members receive the **Behavioral Health News Update** – a monthly communication on recent behavioral health advocacy initiatives, resources and educational offerings.

AHA's website for Behavioral Health is regularly updated with information and resources. These include:

- **Podcasts** featuring conversations with behavioral health professionals on innovations and solutions to challenges.
- Actionable Issue Briefs such as ***Integrating Physical & Behavioral Health: The Time is Now***. This brief provides evidence-based research on how integrating physical and behavioral health services can improve patient outcomes and workforce satisfaction, reduce the total cost of care, improve access and reduce health care disparities and stigma.
- Best practices to **improve access to behavioral health care through community partnerships**. Resources include an assessment checklist and an evidence-informed summary of effective partnerships.
- Centralized resources to address the challenges of **youth** and **maternal** behavioral health service delivery.
- Stigma reduction campaigns, such as AHA's **People Matter, Words Matter** initiative – offering a series of downloadable posters to help your employees adopt patient-centered, respectful language.
- An AHA members-only **professional online network** for behavioral health leaders
- Curated resources to enhance your organization's participation in **Mental Health Awareness Month** and **Minority Mental Health Month**.
- 2024 focus areas include new care delivery models, digital solutions to improve access to care, rural mental health innovations, pipeline optimization, equitable care and more.

For additional resources go to: aha.org/behavioralhealth.