



Association for Behavioral
Health and Wellness

*Advancing benefits and services
in mental health, substance use
and behavior change.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ABHW Responds to Request for Information Regarding Efforts to Address Opioid Epidemic
*Behavioral health plans address scope and best practices***

Washington, DC (February 22, 2018) – The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW), the national voice for payers that manage behavioral health insurance benefits for over 175 million people, responded to a request for information by the Ranking Members for the House Committee on Ways and Means and the House Committee on Energy and Commerce in regards to behavioral health plans' efforts to address the opioid crisis and promote evidence based treatment for opioid use disorders (OUD) in the Medicare population.

The two Committees have oversight of the Medicare Advantage and Part D programs, which cover one-third of all Medicare beneficiaries and about 42 million people that are enrolled in a Part D plan.

ABHW best practices and recommendations included:

- The identification of individuals at risk of opioid dependence is a critical step in helping stop overdose and death. To do this, some ABHW members employ drug utilization review (DUR) programs, while others analyze claims data across both pharmacy and medical benefits to detect opioid use patterns that suggest possible misuse, and others are using their data to better understand trends in opioid usage, track prescribing patterns, and explore the conditions for which opioids are most commonly prescribed.
- Medicare does not currently reimburse for a continuum of behavioral health services. In particular, Medicare does not cover methadone as a treatment for OUD, residential treatment, intensive outpatient programs, and case management. Coverage of these additional services would expand access to OUD treatment and improve the care beneficiaries receive.
- ABHW members face barriers in coordinating Medicare patient care because of 42 CFR Part 2 (Part 2). Obtaining multiple consents from the patient is challenging and obstructs whole-person, integrated approaches to care. We support the harmonization of Part 2 with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act to increase care coordination and integration among treating providers and other entities in communities across the nation.

“ABHW is fully committed to helping defeat the opioid epidemic and support a continuum of evidence based, person-centered care to treat individuals with an opioid use disorder, including medication assisted treatment (MAT). Our members work to identify and prevent addiction where they can; and where they cannot, they help individuals get treatment so that they can recover and lead full, productive lives in the community,” stated ABHW President and CEO, Pamela Greenberg, MPP.



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Read ABHW full comments [here](#).

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[ABHW](#) is the leading health plan association working to improve access and quality of care for mental health and substance use disorders. ABHW's members include national and regional health plans who care for more than 175 million people. Together we work to reduce stigma and advance federal policy on mental health and addiction care. Member companies - Aetna Behavioral Health, Anthem, Beacon Health Options, Centene Corporation, Cigna, New Directions Behavioral Health, Optum, and PerformCare.