



**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 Recommends Improvements to Medicare Advantage Program

Washington, DC (April 25, 2017) – The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW), an association of the nation's leading behavioral health and wellness companies serving over 170 million people, submitted comments to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in response to its request for information related to benefit flexibility and efficiency in the Medicare Advantage (MA) program.

ABHW welcomes the Request for Information that was included in the CMS final 2018 payment and policy updates for Medicare Health and Drug Plans. There is more that can be done to improve the MA program for individuals with a mental illness or substance use disorder, including:

- Updating current regulations so that Part 2 is aligned with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) in order to help promote integrated care.
- Expanding coverage for telehealth services in MA plans to optimize the psychiatric/mental health workforce.
- Allowing an expanded range of providers and professionals to serve MA beneficiaries, including licensed mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, and peers in order to increase access to services and provide more cost-effective care for mental health and addiction.
- Recognizing the benefit of community-based wraparound services and reimbursing for these services, as appropriate, for individuals with chronic conditions.

ABHW's response to the RFI may be accessed [here](#).

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ABHW is an association of the nation's leading behavioral health and wellness companies. These companies provide an array of services related to mental health, substance use disorders, employee assistance, disease management, and other health and wellness programs to over 170 million people in both the public and private sectors. ABHW and its member companies use their behavioral health expertise to improve health care outcomes for individuals and families across the health care spectrum. Member companies - Aetna Behavioral Health, Anthem, Beacon Health Options, Centene Corporation, Cigna, Humana Behavioral Health, New Directions Behavioral Health, Optum, and PerformCare.