Message

Medicaid is the largest payer for mental health services and plays a significant role in the financing of substance use disorder services.[1] Together mental health and substance use disorder services are referred to as behavioral health services. With proper treatment and support, improvement and even recovery are possible for individuals with mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

To receive Medicaid-covered behavioral health services, most States require that the illness or condition, as defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition,[2] has persisted for 6 months and is expected to continue for more than a year.[3, 4, 5, 6]

State Medicaid programs include coverage for core behavioral health services for eligible individuals if they are medically necessary and included in the individual’s plan of care. Services typically include outpatient assessment and treatment, inpatient services, emergency services, and crisis intervention. In addition, beneficiaries may receive case management, community support services, rehabilitation services, and day treatment programs.[7, 8]

Tips

Follow these tips to ensure patients receive the care they need and help strengthen the integrity of the Medicaid program:

- Make sure that behavioral health treatment limitations are no more restrictive than limitations for medical and surgical benefits.[9, 10]
- Perform screening of patients to determine the existence of physical and mental illnesses, or substance use disorders, and make referrals for treatment as required;
- Be aware of limitations on the amount, duration, and scope of services, and track patient use;
- Submit authorization requests if services are expected to go beyond program limits;
- Monitor and audit documentation to ensure it is complete, current, and sufficient to support the services billed; and
- Check with your State Medicaid agency for information about services in your area since these programs vary from State to State.
For more information about Medicaid Program Integrity, visit https://www.cms.gov/Medicare-Medicaid-Coordination/Fraud-Prevention/Medicaid-Integrity-Education/edmic-landing.html on the CMS Medicaid Program Integrity Education website.

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