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MEMORANDUM

To: Primary Care Providers
From: Kathleen McCarthy, Provider Services Director
Date: 12/23/13
Subject: New Mental Health Benefits for Alliance Medi-Cal Members

Background

Beginning January 1, 2014 mental health and substance use disorder services will be expanded for current and newly eligible Medi-Cal members. The Central California Alliance for Health (the Alliance) will cover outpatient mental health services for members with mild to moderate conditions and will also cover alcohol Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) services provided by Primary Care Providers (PCPs). Specialty Mental Health services for severe mental illness (SMI) will continue to be the responsibility of the County Mental Health Plans. The Counties will also continue to be responsible for members that meet criteria for Alcohol and Substance Use Disorder Services.

The Alliance has partnered with Beacon Health Strategies (Beacon)/College Health IPA, a Managed Behavioral Health Organization (MBHO), to administer the new mental health benefits on behalf of the Alliance. Beacon is developing a contracted network of mental health providers available to offer these services to Alliance members and to provide support to PCPs.

Benefits

The mental health services covered by the Alliance starting January 1, 2014 include:

- Individual and group mental health evaluation and treatment (psychotherapy);
- Psychological testing, when clinically indicated to evaluate a mental health condition;
- Outpatient services for the purposes of monitoring drug therapy;
- Outpatient laboratory, drugs, supplies and supplements (excluding anti-psychotic drugs which are covered by Medi-Cal FFS);
- Psychiatric consultation; and
- Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT).

Couples counseling or family counseling for relational problems are **not** covered.

Benefits will be provided based on medical necessity, and based on progress towards treatment goals. There is no “benefit count” limits except that SBIRT intervention is limited to three brief encounters.

Accessing Services/Benefits

The Alliance will continue to cover outpatient laboratory, supplies, supplements and drugs (excluding anti-psychotic drugs) through our lab and pharmacy network. The Alliance will also continue to cover mental health services within the scope of primary care physician practice and begin covering SBIRT services starting January 1, 2014.

Psychiatric and psychological services will be provided through Beacon's provider network. PCPs interested in referring a member for mental health services may access Beacon's Access Line 24 hours a day, 365 days a year via their toll-free number at 1-855-765-9700. Members may also self refer by calling Beacon directly. Beacon will conduct an initial assessment and refer the member to the appropriate resource. Beacon will coordinate with County Mental Health Plans for Specialty Mental Health services if it is determined that a member has a covered mental health diagnosis that results in significant impairment.

PCPs with integrated mental health providers that are interested in offering these services to members can join the Beacon network. To request a contract and credentialing application, please contact providerinquiry@beaconhs.com or call (800) 779-3825 ext. 5672.

Next Steps

The Alliance will distribute additional information as it is released from the State and developed in coordination with Beacon. In early 2014, the Alliance will also be coordinating workshops for PCPs on how to refer members to these services.

If you have questions, please contact your Provider Services Representative at (831) 430-5504 or 1-800-700-3874, ext. 5504. If you would like more information from Beacon Health Strategies, please contact Beacon at 855-765-9700.