

Press Release Sample



CIGNA Behavioral Health

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CIGNA Opens Access to Outpatient Behavioral Benefits And Introduces New Support to Providers Treating Complex Mental Health and Substance Abuse Problems

***As Reports Indicate Depression to Affect Up to 35 Million Americans
Costing U.S. Employers \$44 Billion a Year in Lost Productivity***

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn., June 24, 2003 – CIGNA Behavioral Health (CBH) announced today that the consumers it serves will have open access to their outpatient benefits effective July 1. They will no longer need to call CBH to get "prior authorization" before seeing a network provider for routine outpatient care. Network providers also will no longer need to prepare outpatient treatment reviews before further authorization of their patient's benefits.

The change will help focus CBH benefit management resources on assistance to providers and their patients in treating complex mental health and substance abuse problems.

"CBH will now target benefit management services to those complex cases that could benefit from our review," said (insert name), CBH president & CEO. "We'll leave decisions about accessing benefits to treat less-intensive life problems entirely to outpatient care providers in our network and their patients," said Dr. Dixon.

CBH has programmed its claims systems to automatically highlight complex outpatient or inpatient treatment cases, such as patients with eating disorders, emotional problems of children and adolescents, or patients needing help with prescribed treatment critical to their care. For example, a clinically depressed patient may need a reminder to fill an anti-depressant prescription. Another patient newly discharged from a psychiatric hospital may need help in staying focused on scheduled outpatient treatment.

More Support to Providers -- Less Process to Access Outpatient Benefits

As CBH systems highlight serious clinical problems and treatment, CBH will be able to support providers earlier in the treatment process than ever before. Dr. (name) said CBH should be in a better position to help employers and consumers manage their behavioral health dollar while accessing quality care.

Depression, among the most serious clinical problems faced by consumers, will affect up to 35 million Americans at some point in their lives, the Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA) reported last week. The cost of depression to U.S. employers is estimated at \$44 billion a year in lost productivity -- largely from depressed employees unable to focus in the workplace.

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"CBH found behavioral care providers wanted help in managing benefits for patients with complex problems," said (insert name), CBH chief medical officer. "As a benefit manager, CBH can add real value in helping providers or consumers find alternative, cost-effective and creative solutions to complex treatment issues," Dr. (name) said.

CBH will still step in to assist consumers accessing outpatient benefits if their treatment becomes more intensive -- more than two therapy sessions a week, for example. CBH also will still require prior-authorization of benefits along with treatment reviews for inpatient and residential care. "Admissions to psychiatric hospitals or substance abuse rehabilitation facilities are accompanied with significant medical risks and have a profound effect on patients and their families," Dr. (name) said.

"Consumers may still call us if they have a question about referrals or availability of benefits or just want personalized help with benefit plan issues," said Dr. (insert name), a psychologist and CBH vice president of clinical operations. Many consumers get answers about benefits or select a network provider at CIGNABehavioral.com.

Dr. (name) said CBH also will play a new and important role in showing consumers how to more effectively access their behavioral benefits. CBH care advocates can help guide consumers who are approaching the limits of their employers' annual behavioral benefits coverage, or send educational information on specific care and treatment. Providers also will be able to access tailored information for their assessment and use in treating patients.

A New Era in Behavioral Benefits

CBH already has heard favorable reaction to its new Care Advocacy service model from customers, their health care brokers and consultants, and behavioral care providers. "Consumers want to get help -- fast. Providers want interactions with us that are meaningful. Customers want real value and accountability for their health care dollars. CBH is meeting this challenge. We believe this is a real breakthrough in behavioral benefits management," Dr. (name) said.

CIGNA Behavioral Health (CBH), a CIGNA Health Services business, provides behavioral care benefit management, EAPs, and work / life programs to more than 14 million consumers through health plans offered by large U.S. employers, national and regional HMOs, Taft-Hartley trusts and disability insurers. CBH, with headquarters in Eden Prairie, Minn., operates five care management centers around the U.S. in support of a national network of more than 47,000 independent psychiatrists, psychologists and clinical social workers and more than 4,000 facilities and clinics.

CIGNA Health Services, a division of CIGNA HealthCare, is one of the largest diversified specialty health care operations in the country, providing behavioral health, pharmacy, dental, vision and clinical and wellness management solutions to consumers, employers and insurers through operating subsidiaries of CIGNA Corporation (NYSE: CI), a global employee benefits company.

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