

Behavioral Health Care Authorization and Notification

Overview

Behavioral health services are managed through an arrangement with United Behavioral Health, Inc. (UBH), a national leader in managing high quality behavioral health care programs for commercial and Medicare populations.

Under this agreement, UBH is responsible for management of the following:

- Credentialing and re-credentialing of behavioral health providers
- Utilization management (including authorization and referral management) of behavioral health benefits
- Behavioral health provider network development and management
- Administration of behavioral health care benefits, including member services

In accordance with the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) requirements, Harvard Pilgrim retains oversight and overall accountability for all delegated activities.

Behavioral Health Access Center

Members and providers may contact Harvard Pilgrim's Behavioral Health Access Center at 888-777-4742 for assistance in accessing behavioral health benefits. (A referral from the PCP is not required.)

- The Access Center is open for routine inquiries Mon.–Fri., 8 a.m.–6 p.m.
- Access Center staff (including licensed behavioral health clinicians) are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for:
 - Members or providers needing urgent or emergent assistance with behavioral health needs, including assistance with admissions to alternative level of care settings.
 - Providers needing benefit information or authorization for inpatient or outpatient behavioral health care services.

Written Authorization

UBH is responsible for notifying treating providers (in writing) when behavioral health services are authorized. Written authorization includes the following information:

- Number of units of service authorized
- Timeframes for the provision of service
- Type of services that are authorized

Crisis Assessment

A mental health crisis is an intensive behavioral, emotional, substance use, or psychiatric situation which, if left untreated, could result in an emergency situation.

In a mental health crisis, neither a referral from the PCP, nor authorization from Harvard Pilgrim is required for a crisis (i.e., emergency) assessment (pre-admission evaluation). After the evaluation, contact Harvard Pilgrim's Behavioral Health Access Center at 888-777-4742 to obtain assistance with admissions to alternative level of care settings, and/or the coordination of behavioral health care.

Emergency Care

Harvard Pilgrim covers emergency services that are medically necessary to screen and stabilize members in a medical or behavioral health emergency. Members who believe they are having a medical or behavioral health emergency are encouraged to seek care at the nearest emergency facility. Neither a referral from the PCP or authorization from Harvard Pilgrim are required.

Emergency Inpatient Behavioral Health Admissions

Admitting hospitals are responsible for notifying Harvard Pilgrim's Behavioral Health Access Center at 888-777-4742 within two (2) business days of an emergent/urgent inpatient admission from an Emergency Department.

Access Center clinicians are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to assist with placements, and emergent or urgent referral requests.

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Non-Emergent Inpatient Behavioral Health Admissions

Prior authorization is required for non-emergent inpatient admissions including:

- Psychiatric admissions
- Psychiatric observation bed
- Substance abuse detoxification and treatment

Behavioral health providers are responsible for contacting Harvard Pilgrim's Behavioral Health Access Center at 888-777-4742 to obtain authorization.

Alternative to Hospital Programs

Prior authorization is required before Harvard Pilgrim members are admitted to any alternative programs for treatment of psychiatric or substance abuse problems. Alternatives to mental health and substance abuse hospitalization include:

- Day treatment
- Intensive outpatient treatment
- Partial hospitalization
- Programs providing multi-model therapeutic interventions

Alternative program stays are reviewed concurrently to evaluate the on-going medical necessity of continued treatment, and to identify opportunities for timely discharge planning.

Outpatient Services

A referral from a PCP is not required for outpatient behavioral health services, but providers may contact the Harvard Pilgrim's Behavioral Health Access Center to confirm member eligibility and benefit information. Members may self-refer to in-network providers, or contact the Access Center for assistance in accessing behavioral health (BH) services. (Notification for routine, in-network outpatient services is not required.)

Routine outpatient services include:

- Medication management
- Psychiatric consultation and evaluation
- Substance abuse treatment
- Therapy sessions

Non-routine outpatient services require authorization. Non-routine services include:

- Intensive outpatient program treatment
- Partial hospitalization and day treatment programs
- Outpatient electroconvulsive treatment
- Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) for major depression
- Psychological testing and neuropsychological assessment
- Extended outpatient treatment visits beyond 45 to 50 minutes in duration with or without medication management or any treatment routinely involving more than one outpatient visit in a day.

Clinical Care Management

Collaboration with PCPs, mental health providers, community agencies and members is an essential component of UBH's behavioral health case management program. Licensed behavioral health clinicians work collaboratively with members and/or providers to coordinate appropriate inpatient or outpatient mental health and substance abuse treatment for Harvard Pilgrim members.

- UBH is committed to supporting the role of the PCP in coordinating the member's care.
- UBH expects that behavioral health providers will, when possible, obtain a signed Release of Information Form from the member, and exchange relevant treatment information with the PCP as clinically appropriate.
- Based on input from the treatment team, behavioral health care managers use evidence-based clinical criteria to determine the appropriate level of care for inpatient and outpatient mental health and substance abuse services.
- Medical professionals are encouraged to contact the Behavioral Health Access Center to discuss individual patient situations and determine who might benefit from mental health or substance abuse services.

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PUBLICATION HISTORY

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