



PROVIDER ALERT



Alert # 10 10-01-10 HCAL, HCBK, HCCH, HCKK, HCNC, HCNE, HCYA

Outpatient Psychiatric Services

Community Care is issuing this alert to emphasize the expectation for all outpatient mental health providers to schedule psychiatry appointments as expeditiously as possible based on individual need.

Community Care is aware that many outpatient mental health facilities have policies in place in an attempt to manage psychiatry appointments, such as requiring that a member attend an intake and two outpatient therapy sessions prior to scheduling a psychiatric evaluation.

There may be instances that such a policy may be appropriate for individual members seeking outpatient services. However, in other instances, such a policy may lead to unintended delays to members in need of psychiatric care. An area where this has increasingly caused concerns for members and families is when a child/adolescent is discharged from a residential treatment facility (RTF) and is in need of an appointment with a local psychiatrist for evaluation and psychiatric medication management. We have heard concerns from RTF staff and case management staff that this type of policy has created unnecessary delays in psychiatric assessment and medication management.

Community Care understands that an intake may be a necessary step in initiating services for a new consumer, but expects that providers within the network will make all reasonable efforts to support the Department of Public Welfare standard which requires that members have access to routine services within 7 days. This access standard applies to all types of clinical appointments, including psychiatric services when indicated. In instances where a member is clearly being referred for psychiatric services, especially for children being discharged from RTF placements, Community Care is stressing that Outpatient Providers make all reasonable attempts to schedule the first available psychiatric appointment and forego requirements that are not regulatory in nature, such as requiring two therapy sessions first.

Community Care also encourages providers to utilize nurses and CRNP's for medication visits to alleviate limited physician availability. These services are included in the outpatient registration (OPR) and the fee schedule for outpatient mental health clinics.

Community Care requests that any provider not able to meet the access standards contact your Provider Relations Representative as soon as possible so that Community Care may address the issue in the most expeditious and proactive manner.

In addition to this alert, Community Care will be addressing the responsibilities of RTF's directly with the RTF providers. RTF responsibilities include scheduling outpatient psychiatry appointments as well in advance of discharge as possible and providing a discharge summary and/or referral information to the outpatient provider prior to the scheduled appointment.

If you have any questions related to this alert, please contact your Provider Relations Representative.