

Members Are Entitled to Convenient Access to Practitioners

UPMC Health Plan and Western Behavioral Health (WBH), work together to ensure that members get behavioral health appointments in a timely manner and that they have quick access to WBH by telephone.

We measure how quickly we answer the telephone and how many callers hang up before their call is answered. WBH has met its standards each quarter throughout 2004. Nonetheless, we have continued to try to improve our telephone responsiveness.

We have adopted appointment access standards that meet or exceed state and national guidelines. UPMC Health Plan members are entitled to:

- Appointments for routine behavioral health services within seven calendar days
- Services for urgent needs within 24 hours
- Non-life-threatening emergency services with one hour
- Immediate emergency services in life-threatening situations

In 2004, WBH practitioners met the appointment standard for urgent and emergency services 100% of the time. Further, routine appointments were offered within seven days of the request for an appointment 73% of the time on average for the year; however, remains below our performance goal of 80%. Interventions are underway to improve routine access. For instance, Care Management staff are available to assist members with access to routine care. They can provide behavioral health referrals, or make three way calls with providers and members to ensure the appointment is made within 7 days. WBH tracks times when providers do not offer timely appointments.

WBH also examined its method of measuring routine access: via quarterly mailed member surveying. Historically, the number of members responding to the member survey has been low. In 2005, phone surveys will replace the mailed questionnaires as the method of measurement to capture more member data related to routine access.