

Blue Cross Blue Shield of MA Expands Options for Mental Health

New partnerships increase access to primary mental health services and specialized care for OCD, serious mental illness, trauma, and substance use disorders

On May 4th, 2022 BCBS of MA announced the expansion of its mental health provider network as part of its commitment to ensuring its members have access to high quality, affordable mental health care. BCBS is also contracting with primary mental health groups to match members to clinicians who are most appropriate for their needs and make it easier to schedule an appointment.

Adding Mental Health Groups. Various types of treatment facilities and coverage are available through BCBSMA and covered at no cost to you as long as you use a participating network provider. Sometimes what's covered can be confusing. To be sure that you are covered for specific facilities or services, you should have the provider/hospital or other facility call BCBSMA to obtain authorization. Blue Cross will notify the provider of what your plan covers and all requirements for reimbursement. **Please note that emergency room clearance is a common requirement prior to entering a treatment facility.**

Teamsters Local 170 Health & Welfare Fund provides you with benefits, programs and resources to assist you on your journey to recovery. You should always feel safe accessing the care you need, in a secure environment. Blue Cross has contracted with the following practices; Thriveworks, Headway, Refresh Mental Health and Valera Health. These practices bring together independent psychiatrists, psychologists and therapists that can treat a broad array of mental health conditions including serious mental health illness. These providers offer treatment with diverse clinicians serving all ages and, as part of their contracts with Blue Cross, have agreed to prioritize the company's members with appointments available within two days for urgent mental health needs, and five days for mild to moderate needs. The practices have also committed to offering both virtual and in-person care.

Sub-specialty Partnerships. BCBSMA has also contracted with several specialty mental health provider organizations that provide care for specific conditions including obsessive compulsive disorder and substance abuse disorder. Specialty providers joining the Blue Cross network include NOCD (for outpatient telehealth treatment of OCD) and Forge Health (trauma and substance use disorder care for first responders). In the coming months, Blue Cross plans to add specialty provider groups focused of severe eating disorders and LGBTQ and racial inequity issues. Blue Cross continues to offer specialty mental health services through its partners Aware Recovery Care, an in-home addiction treatment provider, and Brightline, a virtual behavioral health care front door for children, teens, and families.

Other Mental Health Resources. Blue Cross is deeply committed to supporting the mental health of its members, customers, employees and the community. The company is known for its innovative approach to mental health and substance use disorder,

including the in-house staff of clinicians and specifically trained mental health case managers. Blue Cross' Mental Health Resource Center is designed to help members better understand their mental health care options, find clinicians, and explore self-guided tools for managing stress, anxiety, depression and insomnia. Blue Cross also offers exclusive member discounts on classes that support mindfulness and wellness, including yoga and meditation. Members who need assistance finding mental health and/or substance use support options can call BCBS dedicated line at **(888) 389-7764**. Representatives help guide members to the right support and, in some cases, help locate appropriate clinicians who are accepting new patients and even assist with setting up the first visit.

Your coverage through BCBSMA includes everything required by the MA State Law and additional benefits. Blue Cross works closely with its in-network providers to ensure that they understand the benefits and all authorizations, etc. that are required for reimbursement. BCBSMA may also pair you with a case manager who will help you navigate your treatment and coverage options and who will check-in with you from time to time to assess your overall well-being.

In general, you will have coverage for medically necessary care at the following levels:

Partial Hospital Program (PHP): Ongoing OP support, PHP programs provide individual, group and family therapy for 6-8 hours a day, 5-7 days a week

Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP): Ongoing OP support, IOP programs provide individual, group and family therapy for 3-4 hours a day, 3-4 days a week

Outpatient Behavioral Health Services: Office based individual, group, and family therapy with a private therapist (no authorization required)

Rehab or Acute Residential Treatment (ART): This level of care is often needed after inpatient detoxification. It's also available for those who don't require detoxification from a substance, but who may need 24-hour supervised treatment. ART facilities provide individual, group, and family therapy along with education services, as well as access to community treatment such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotic Anonymous.

Inpatient Detoxification: If you're physically addicted to a substance or substances, or have been using substances in large amounts, you may require medically supervised withdrawal to avoid complications from the substance you have used. Inpatient detox facilities provide this service, which typically takes 5-7 days, depending on the amount, type, and duration of your substance misuse.

Medication Assisted Therapy (MAT): Proper use of certain medication can help individuals combat the physical opioid addiction and can offer relief, as well as support in other areas. Established evidence indicates that MAT is a highly effective approach to preventing overdoses and death for people living with opioid addiction.

Please take advantage of the benefits, tools and resources available to you and start your recovery today. If you have questions regarding these benefit changes, please contact BCBSMA services at 800-241-0803.