



Association for Behavioral
Health and Wellness

*Advancing benefits and services
in mental health, substance use
and behavior change.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Tiffany A. Huth

Phone: 202.487.8057

Email: Huth@abhw.org

ABHW Supports Steps Taken by White House Commission on Opioids *Evidence-Based Recommendations Headed in Right Direction*

WASHINGTON (August 1, 2017) – The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW), an association of the nation's leading behavioral health and wellness companies serving over 170 million people, today issued the following statement in response to the White House Commission on Combatting Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis' interim final report for improving federal response to drug addiction and the opioid crisis.

The Commission's interim report presented nine recommends for President Trump to consider along with a list of eleven other areas that the Commission will address in the final report due on October 1, 2017.

ABHW and its members are encouraged by the Commission's interim final report and their efforts to address the unprecedented opioid epidemic here in the United States. In particular, ABHW supports the following recommendations:

- Better align, through regulation, patient privacy laws specific to addiction with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) ... through the Overdose Prevention and Patient Safety Act, "OPPS Act" of 2017 - Congressmen Murphy and Blumenauer's bipartisan legislation, H.R. 3545, will allow appropriate access to patient information that is essential for providing whole-person, coordinated care and strengthen protections of substance use disorder records which will help to ensure persons with opioid use disorder and other substance use disorders receive the safe, effective care they need.
- Waiver approval for states to eliminate barriers to treatment resulting from the federal Institutes for Mental Diseases (IMD) exclusion within the Medicaid program – the exclusion limits beneficiary access to needed and appropriate care. In some areas IMDs are the only hospitals available. In other locations, because of the exclusion, many Medicaid enrollees with acute psychiatric needs, such as those expressing suicidal or homicidal thoughts, are sent to general hospital emergency departments, although these facilities often lack the resources or expertise to care for such patients.
- Enhance interstate data sharing amount state-based prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMPs) - expanded access to PDMP data helps identify individuals at risk of prescription drug abuse and enables greater coordination across health care entities. ABHW encourages the Commission to include in the final report a recommendation that private health plans or pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) have access to PDMP data. With access to PDMPs, payers can improve clinical decision making and patient health care and safety; they can also become a strategic partner in preventing and identifying abuse.

We look forward to working with the Commission and the Administration on eradicating this epidemic that is taking the lives of over 140 people each and every day.

ABHW Whitepaper on the Opioid Crisis: [Behavioral Health Organizations' Current and Future Approaches to Addressing the U.S. Opioid Crisis](#)



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ABHW Whitepaper on 42 CFR Part 2: [Now is the Time to Strengthen Protection of Substance Use Records by Revisiting the Substance Use Privacy Laws](#)

White House Commission on Combatting Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis: [Interim Report](#)

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ABHW is an association of the nation's leading behavioral health and wellness companies. These companies provide an array of services related to mental health, substance use disorders, employee assistance, disease management, and other health and wellness programs to over 170 million people in both the public and private sectors. ABHW and its member companies use their behavioral health expertise to improve health care outcomes for individuals and families across the health care spectrum. Member companies - Aetna Behavioral Health, Anthem, Beacon Health Options, Centene Corporation, Cigna, Humana Behavioral Health, New Directions Behavioral Health, Optum, and PerformCare.