



Advancing Health Care Policy
for Mental Health and Addiction

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ABHW Submits Comments on ONC's Health IT Strategic Plan

Washington, DC (March 18, 2020) – The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW), the national voice for payers that manage behavioral health insurance benefits for over 200 million people, today submitted comments in response to the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology's (ONC) 2020-2025 Federal Health IT Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan).

Below are four key points ABHW supported in its comments.

1. **Promote Health and Wellness.** Promoting health and wellness by improving individual access to health information, advancing healthy and safe practices through health information technology (IT), and integrating health and human services information. A key aspect of person-centered care is empowering individuals through access to their health information as it allows patients to be more engaged in the care and management of their health.
2. **Enhance the Delivery and Experience of Care.** Ensuring that patients receive the care they need through improved care delivery and patient experience.
 - Aligning 42 CFR Part 2 with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).
 - Eliminating barriers to mental health (MH) and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment availability by expanding access to such treatments through telehealth.
 - Increasing the size of the addiction service workforce, and treatment and recovery infrastructure.
3. **Build a Secure, Data-Driven Ecosystem to Accelerate Research and Innovation.** Implementing policies that place a priority on enhancing evidence-based addiction treatment.
4. **Connect Healthcare and Health Data through an Interoperable Health IT Infrastructure.**
 - Expanding access to prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMP).
 - Improving partnerships between electronic health information exchange (HIE) entities.

ABHW's full comments are available [here](#).

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[ABHW](#) is the leading health plan association working to improve access and quality of care for mental health and substance use disorders. ABHW's members include national and regional health plans who care for more than 200 million people. Together we work to reduce stigma and advance federal policy on mental health and addiction care. Member companies - Aetna Behavioral Health, AmeriHealth Caritas, Anthem, Centene Corporation, Cigna, Kaiser Permanente, Magellan Health, New Directions Behavioral Health, and Optum.