



Advancing Health Care Policy
for Mental Health and Addiction

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ABHW Comments on CMS' Measures to Prevent Fraud, Waste,
and Abuse in the Healthcare System**

Washington, DC (October 5, 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, submitted comments on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) Electronic Prescribing of Controlled Substances (EPCS) Request for Information (RFI).

ABHW supports measures that prevent fraud, waste, and abuse in the healthcare system and agrees with the mandate in the Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment for Patients and Communities Act (SUPPORT Act) for Medicare Part D providers to use EPCS beginning January 2021. Additionally, we do not believe that the mandate should be delayed to January 2022, as proposed in the CY 2021 Physician Fee Schedule.

Despite this mandate, ABHW believes there are barriers to the success of EPCS, including the following:

- *Burdensome Evaluation Requirement.* The Ryan Haight Act requires an in-person evaluation before a provider can utilize EPCS. Not all people with substance use disorders (SUD) are able to have an initial in-person visit. We request CMS urge the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to provide a permanent path for providers to treat SUDs via telehealth and thereby use EPCS to its full potential.
- *Lack of Access to Medication Assisted Treatment.* Treatment for opioid use disorder (OUD) is most effective with medication assisted treatment (MAT). Practitioners are required by DEA to apply for a waiver, as well as separately register in each state where they may prescribe buprenorphine. This creates a major hurdle to prescribing, as it severely limits the number of providers available to offer MAT. We urge CMS to work with DEA and Congress to ensure this barrier is removed to increase access to MAT and greatly improve the efficacy of EPCS.

ABHW's full comments: [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/Beacon, Centene Corporation, Cigna, Kaiser Permanente, Magellan Health, New Directions Behavioral Health, and Optum.