



Advancing Health Care Policy
for Mental Health and Addiction

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ABHW RESPONDS TO BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER ON
FUTURE TELEHEALTH POLICY**

Washington, DC (December 10, 2021) – The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW), the national voice for payers that manage behavioral health insurance benefits for over 200 million people, responds to the Bipartisan Policy Center Digital Health Task Force request for comments on future telehealth policy.

“ABHW appreciates actions by the Administration and Congress to expand telehealth services during the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE). We advocate that the flexibilities continue for at least one year after the PHE to collect appropriate data to provide an adequate amount of time to determine which of those flexibilities should be continued permanently. We also call for investments in understanding which services are clinically beneficial to adults and children at the same (or higher) quality as in-person visits.”

We believe telehealth can play a critical role in expanding access to mental health (MH) and substance use disorder (SUD) services and urge consideration of the following policy changes:

- *Eliminate the new Medicare in-person visit requirement for mental health services;*
- *Expand cross state licensure;*
- *Examine audio-only telehealth services;*
- *Permanently eliminate the in-person evaluation requirement from the Ryan Haight Act; and*
- *Invest in electronic health records for behavioral health providers.*

Full recommendations can be found [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.