



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW) Responds to the Third Temporary Extension of the COVID-19 Telemedicine Flexibilities for Prescription of Controlled Medications

Washington D.C. – The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW), the national voice for payers that manage behavioral health insurance benefits for over 200 million people, issued the following statement in response to the extension of the Third Temporary Extension of the COVID-19 Telemedicine Flexibilities for Prescription of Controlled Medications.

ABHW appreciates the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) ensuring continuity of care for patients by maintaining tele-prescribing flexibilities for one year.

“The DEA’s extension of telehealth flexibilities of controlled substances is a lifeline for many mental health and substance use disorder patients, said Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW) President and CEO Debbie Withey. “ABHW is dedicated to advocating for accessible and convenient care. Buprenorphine, in particular, is very safe and one of the gold standards of care for opioid use disorders (OUD). The option to provide buprenorphine-based treatment via telemedicine will enhance access to care and address health disparities. ABHW strongly supports removing the in-person requirement permanently for tele-prescribing buprenorphine as this requirement hinders access to care.”

Individuals with mental health and substance use disorders may not physically be able to leave their home to see a provider in-person. The extension of the tele-prescribing flexibilities puts patients first and continues to provide access for people to have the timely care they need. In addition, there is an acute shortage of behavioral health professionals across the country, particularly those with prescribing authority, that impedes access to services for people with OUD. The actions taken today will help ensure patients do not have their treatment disrupted.

For more on ABHW’s efforts and advocacy related to tele-prescribing of controlled substances, please visit <https://abhw.org/advocacy>.

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ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

ABHW is the nation's only health plan association that focuses solely on improving access and quality of care for mental health and substance use disorders. ABHW's members include national and regional health plans that care for more than 200 million people. Together, we work to reduce stigma and advance federal policy on mental health and substance use disorder care. ABHW member companies - Aetna Behavioral Health, CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, Centene Corporation/Magellan Health, Elevance Health, Evernorth, a Cigna company, Kaiser Permanente, Lucet, Molina Healthcare, Optum, and PerformCare, a subsidiary of AmeriHealth Caritas. To learn more, visit www.abhw.org and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).