



Member Access to Behavioral Health Care

Re: Patient Calls During and After Normal Business Hours

Dear Behavioral Health Clinician and Office Staff:

Aetna Better Health of Louisiana is required to meet the Louisiana Department of Health and Health Plan contractual requirements ensuring our patients have access to a Behavioral Health Clinician during and after normal business hours.

REQUIREMENTS

Appointment Availability

Behavioral Health Clinicians must adhere to State of Louisiana and Health Plan requirements regarding timely access to care. This means that there are limits on how long a patient may have to wait to get appointments and telephone advice.

Aetna Better Health of Louisiana contractually requires its providers to comply with the following behavioral health care appointment access standards for prescribing and non-prescribing practitioners:

Initial Visit	Routine, Non-Urgent, or Preventive	Wait Time in Office Standard	Emergency Services	Urgent with no immediate danger
Within 10 business days of original request	14 days of referral	No more than 45 minutes A new appointment offered if wait time greater than 90 minutes	Immediately upon presentation at delivery site Appointment within 1 hour of request	Urgent care within 24 hours Appointment within 48 hours of request 24/7 days a week
Non-Life Threatening Urgent Care	Non-Urgent Sick Care	Non-Urgent Walk-ins	Follow-Up ED visits	Follow-Up Care
Within 6 hours	Within 72 hours	Seen if possible or schedule for an appointment consistent with written scheduling procedures	According to ED attending provider discharge instructions	Within 20 calendar days Prescribers 30 calendar days Non-Prescribers

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- Non-life-threatening urgent : There is no immediate danger to self or others and/or if the situation is not addressed within six (6) hours it may escalate to being a risk to self or others:
 - Extreme anxiety
 - Parent child issues
 - Passive suicidal ideation
 - Excess drug or alcohol usage
- Urgent – no immediate danger: There is no immediate danger to self or others and/or if the situation is not addressed within forty-eight (48) hours, it may escalate to being a risk to self or others:
 - Follow-up to a crisis stabilization
 - Escalating depression
 - Escalating anxiety
 - Escalating drug/alcohol usage
 - Escalating behavioral issues in children

Additionally, Behavioral Health Clinicians are contractually required to offer:

Follow-up BH Medication Mgt.	Follow-up BH Therapy	Next Follow-up BH Therapy
Within 3 months of first appointment	Within 10 business days of first appointment	Within 30 business days of last appointment

Triage &/or Screening

Behavioral Health Clinicians must also provide or arrange for the provision of 24/7 triage or screening services by telephone. Telephone triage or screening services must be provided in a timely manner appropriate for the patient's condition, and the triage or screening wait time does not exceed 30 minutes.

At a minimum maintain a procedure for triaging or screening patient telephone calls includes the 24/7 employment of a telephone answering machine/service/or office staff that will inform the caller:

- a. Regarding the length of wait for a return call from the provider (not to exceed 1 hours); and
- b. How the caller may obtain urgent or emergency care including, when applicable, how to contact another provider who has agreed to be on-call to triage or screen by phone, or if needed, deliver urgent or emergency care.

Aetna Better Health of Louisiana's Provider Relations and Quality Management departments will be monitoring Behavioral Health Clinicians' during and after hour availability to ensure they and their employees adhere to State of Louisiana and Health Plan requirements.

We appreciate your cooperation regarding this matter. If you would like additional information or have any questions regarding the Provider Access requirements, please contact your Provider Relations representative.

Wishing you the best!

Aetna Better Health of Louisiana