

## Behavioral Health Treatment (BHT)

### *Medi-Cal Primary Care Provider (PCP) Frequently Asked Questions*

#### Medi-Cal BHT Benefit

Medi-Cal plans are responsible for providing BHT services to individuals under the age of 21 for whom a licensed physician or psychologist determines that BHT services are indicated to promote, to the maximum extent practicable, the functioning of the individual, including those with and without a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Central California Alliance for Health (the Alliance) partners with Carelon Behavioral Health of California (Carelon) to provide members with non-specialty mental health services, including BHT. BHT services include Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and a variety of other behavioral interventions, such as cognitive behavioral intervention, parent/guardian training, self-management, and social skills. Prior authorization from Carelon is required.

#### 1. How do I know if my patient would benefit from BHT?

Behaviors that may indicate a need for BHT services include:

- 1) Significant withdrawal and avoidance of social interaction
- 2) Significant language and communication problems
- 3) High need for sameness and predictability
- 4) Impaired thinking abilities and/organizational problems
- 5) Consistent failure to achieve self-care appropriate to age
- 6) Uneven patterns of development
- 7) Lack of development of reciprocal, interactive, and/or imaginative play

If you want to request further evaluation and/or BHT services, you can refer the patient to Carelon Behavioral Health of California by:

- 1) Using either a PCP referral form; or
- 2) Having the patient's family call Carelon at (855) 765-9700.

#### Role of Carelon

Carelon has a BHT Services team that consists of Board-Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) and Care Coordinators to support coordinating a member's care from point of referral to linkage with a provider, as well as ongoing monitoring and management of BHT Services.

#### Role of Primary Care Provider

The role of the pediatrician and PCP is particularly important in securing a diagnosis, making a recommendation for medically necessary BHT, as well as providing medical follow-up for the commonly co-occurring medical disorders. This document answers frequently asked questions related to the PCPs role with patients under age 21 with behavioral concerns and/or missed developmental milestones that can be addressed by BHT.

#### Provider and Member Contact Information

All provider requests and referrals for behavioral health services can be submitted to Carelon. Beneficiaries can be directed to contact the **Carelon Customer Service Department at (855) 765-9700**

**Note:** You can refer a member for further evaluation and recommend BHT/ABA services simultaneously. The request for evaluation will not delay the start of BHT when recommended by a MD or psychologist

## 2. Where can I get a copy of the PCP referral form?

The PCP Referral Form is located on the Alliance provider website at:

<https://thealliance.health/for-providers/manage-care/behavioral-health/carelon-primary-care-provider-pcp-referral-form/>

When completing the PCP Referral Form, check the box: "Behavioral Health Treatment (BHT)/Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) Services." Include a progress note with a diagnosis and a physician recommendation for BHT or ABA services. Fax the referral form to (877) 321-1776.

## 3. What resources are available to assist me in conducting a screening for the appropriateness of BHT?

- **MCHAT Screening Checklist** can be used to help identify ASD for children up to age 30 months. You can download the free tool in multiple languages at: <https://www.mchatscreen.com/>
- Carelon has developed a **Diagnostic Evaluation Form** to help you gather relevant information for the comprehensive diagnosis. Please find the form on the Alliance provider website at: <https://thealliance.health/for-providers/manage-care/behavioral-health/carelon-diagnostic-evaluation-form-medi-cal/>

**Note:** On the Diagnostic Evaluation Form, you will see several behavioral indicators that BHT/ABA treatment services may be beneficial to the individual. Based on your observation of the child or discussion with the child's guardian, the presence of two or more of these behaviors can assist in your determination of whether services are medically necessary. These include:

- |                              |                        |                       |
|------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| • Speech Delay               | • Poor Eye Contact     | • Low Social Response |
| • Low Peer Interaction       | • Repetitive Behaviors | • Hyperactivity       |
| • Preoccupation of Interests | • Stereotypic Movement | • Echolalia           |
| • Self-Injury                | • Aggression           | • Elopement           |

## 4. What happens after I refer my patient to Carelon? Referrals are processed within 2 business days of receipt. A Carelon BHT Care Coordinator will outreach to the member/caregiver to discuss the referral, complete an intake, and begin linkage, with the goal of connecting a member to a provider within 10 business days of the receipt of all required information.

- a) **Initial Screening/Referral.** After the PCP refers a patient to Carelon for BHT services, a Carelon Care Coordinator will contact the PCP to request completion of the **Diagnostic**

**Evaluation Form** (if not already completed). This form helps PCPs to gather additional information on medical factors and to make a preliminary diagnosis supporting the recommendation for BHT services (see link for the form above).

- b) Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation (CDE).** If the PCP believes a more comprehensive evaluation is necessary before recommending BHT services, the PCP may refer the member for a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation by a pediatrician, child neurologist, child psychiatrist or psychologist experienced as a diagnostician. This evaluation will include a psychosocial/developmental history from a parent or guardian, direct observation, and standardized cognitive and functional measures, including an evaluation for ASD. PCPs can use the **Diagnostic Evaluation Form** to refer to Carelon, who will assist with this referral to its network of behavioral health providers.

Please find the **Diagnostic Evaluation Form** on the Alliance provider website at:

<https://thealliance.health/for-providers/manage-care/behavioral-health/carelon-diagnostic-evaluation-form-medi-cal/>

- c) Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA).** If a patient receives a recommendation for BHT and meets medical necessity criteria, Carelon will authorize a FBA and refer the member to a contracted provider in Carelon's network. An FBA is conducted by a network BCBA for the purpose of establishing a detailed and individualized treatment plan to address specific functional and behavioral goals and objectives.

**5. Do I need to obtain authorization for my patients to be evaluated for BHT/ABA services?**

No, PCPs do not need to establish an authorization for patients to begin the process. After the PCP refers the patient to Carelon, all additional referrals and authorization will be handled by Carelon's BHT services team.

**6. How can I help my patients access Carelon's BHT providers?**

You can refer patients to call Carelon at (855) 765-9700. Carelon's customer service representatives can help make referrals directly to an appropriate behavioral health specialist.

**7. Will I receive updates on my patient's progress?**

Carelton will provide a referral disposition to the primary care provider. Additional treatment updates can be requested or scheduled based on the PCP's need for information related to progress. That information can be mailed, faxed, or sent secure encrypted email per HIPAA guidelines. If you would like Carelon to provide you with feedback on your patient's treatment plan and progress, please ensure your patient has completed the consent form to allow one of Carelon's Care Managers (BCBAs) to exchange information with you.

**8. How will BHT be monitored by Carelon?**

Carelon employs a BHT Services Team that includes Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) and Care Coordinators. BCBAs are peer reviewers for the network BCBA providers who supervise direct service providers. Treatment plans are reviewed no less than every six months but may occur more frequently if there is case complexity, risk behaviors or no measurable progress. Care Coordinators are actively involved in member intake, linking patients with providers, monitoring weekly progress updates and general coordination of services. Progress is evidenced by changes in maladaptive behaviors and utilization patterns.

**9. What services are provided through the Regional Center?**

All other services currently provided by the Regional Centers (i.e., in-home support services, school-based programs, respite care, etc.) will continue to be provided. Only services associated with BHT for the treatment of patients under the age of 21 will be managed by Carelon.

**10. Where can I get a copy of a patient consent to release information?** Member consent forms can be found on the Alliance website at:

<https://thealliance.health/wp-content/uploads/Carelon-Behavioral-Health-of-California-Authorization-to-Release-Confidential-Information-English.pdf>