

To: AmeriHealth Caritas DC Pediatric, Family Medicine, and Behavioral Health

**Providers** 

Date: September 18, 2025

Subject: Use of First-Line Psychosocial Care for Children and Adolescents on Antipsychotic

Medications (APP)

## Dear Provider:

AmeriHealth Caritas District of Columbia (DC) is writing to share important information regarding the HEDIS® APP Measure: *Use of First-Line Psychosocial Care for Children and Adolescents on Antipsychotic Medications.* 

#### What is the APP Measure?

This measure evaluates the percentage of children and adolescents (ages 1–17) who are newly prescribed an antipsychotic medication **and** who received psychosocial care (therapy, counseling, or behavioral interventions) as first-line treatment **before or at the same time** they start medication.

## Why it Matters:

- **Best Practice in Care:** Evidence-based guidelines recommend psychosocial interventions as a first-line approach for many behavioral health conditions in children and adolescents.
- **Improved Outcomes:** Psychosocial care helps address underlying issues, promotes coping skills, and may reduce the need for or intensity of medication treatment.
- **Safety Considerations:** Antipsychotic medications can carry significant side effects in young populations, including weight gain, metabolic changes, and movement disorders.
- **Quality and Compliance:** Meeting this measure supports quality care standards and ensures alignment with national practice guidelines.

## **Action Needed:**

To help ensure your patients receive appropriate care and to meet this measure:

- 1. Assess First: Evaluate whether psychosocial care is appropriate before prescribing an antipsychotic.
- 2. **Refer to Behavioral Health:** Connect patients and families with counseling, therapy, or other behavioral health services.
- 3. **Document Clearly:** Record all referrals, therapy sessions, and interventions in the medical record and submit them in claims/encounter data.
- 4. **Collaborate:** Partner with behavioral health specialists, care managers, and families to create a treatment plan that prioritizes psychosocial support.
- 5. **Educate Families:** Discuss the benefits of psychosocial care and potential side effects of antipsychotic medications.

## **Billing and Coding Guidance**

To ensure psychosocial services are appropriately captured for quality reporting, use the following CPT/HCPCS codes when submitting claims/encounters:

# Psychotherapy (individual/family):

- 90832 Psychotherapy, 30 minutes
- 90834 Psychotherapy, 45 minutes
- 90837 Psychotherapy, 60 minutes
- 90846 Family psychotherapy (without patient)
- 90847 Family psychotherapy (with patient present)

# Other psychosocial/behavioral interventions:

- H0004 Individual counseling by a qualified professional
- H0035 Mental health partial hospitalization, per diem
- H2019 Therapeutic behavioral services, per 15 minutes

# **Group psychotherapy:**

- 90849 Multiple-family group psychotherapy
- 90853 Group psychotherapy

**Tip:** Always document psychosocial interventions in the patient's medical record and include the service code on claims to ensure accurate reporting for APP compliance.

# **Support and Resources**

If you need assistance identifying behavioral health providers, referral resources, or additional coding guidance, please contact Lauren Swank, Behavioral Health Operational Manager at 202-326-8932 or <a href="mailto:lswank@amerihealthcaritas.com">lswank@amerihealthcaritas.com</a>.

Thank you for your partnership in delivering high-quality, evidence-based care for our pediatric members. Together, we can ensure children and adolescents receive safe, effective, and comprehensive treatment.

Sincerely, AmeriHealth Caritas DC