

# ACCESS TO CARE GUIDELINES: **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**

AmeriHealth Caritas DC providers must meet standard guidelines as outlined in this publication to help ensure that plan enrollees have timely access to behavioral health care.

Providers are required to offer hours of operation that are no less than the hours of operation offered to patients with commercial insurance. Appointment scheduling and wait times for enrollees should comply with the access standards defined below.

## ACCESS TO **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE**



### **Emergency psychiatric or mental health care**

*(An active crisis where the enrollee or others are at risk, or where there is an expected risk in the next 24 hours.)*

Within one (1) hour of the need being presented to the provider

### **Urgent psychiatric or mental health care**

Within the same day of the need being presented to the plan or provider

### **Behavioral health phone crisis triage**

Within fifteen (15) minutes over the phone

*Must be available on a 24-hour basis, seven days a week.*

### **Psychiatric intervention or face-to-face assessment**

Within ninety (90) minutes of completion of phone assessment, as needed

*Must be available on a 24-hour basis, seven days a week.*

### **Hospital discharge follow-up care with an outpatient provider**

*(Care following discharge from a psychiatric inpatient facility or psychiatric residential treatment facility.)*

Initial assessment within seven days of discharge to the community

*Must include assessment and provision of prescriptions if needed.*

Plus subsequent appointment within thirty (30) calendar days of discharge from an acute care facility

# ACCESS TO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE



**Community-based interventions screening for children/youth admitted to an acute care facility**

Within 48 hours of admission by contacting the department of behavioral health child/youth care manager

**Routine behavioral health appointments**

Within seven calendar days of request

**Initial service in the follow-up care based on results of an assessment**

Within ten (10) business days of completion of the assessment

**Waiting time in a provider office**

Not to exceed 45 minutes

**Use of free interpreter services**

As needed upon enrollee request during all appointments



## AFTER-HOURS ACCESSIBILITY

AmeriHealth Caritas DC enrollees must have access to quality, comprehensive health care services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Behavioral health providers must have either an answering machine or an answering service for enrollees during after-hours for non-emergent issues. The answering service must forward calls to the behavioral health provider, an on-call provider, and/or instruct the enrollee that the provider will contact the enrollee within 30 minutes. When an answering machine is used after hours, the answering machine must provide the enrollee with a process for reaching a provider after hours. The after-hours coverage must be accessible using the provider's office's daytime phone number.

For emergent issues, both the answering service and/or answering machine must direct the enrollee to **call 911** or **go to the nearest emergency room**. AmeriHealth Caritas DC will monitor access to after-hours care on an annual basis by conducting a survey of behavioral health offices after normal business hours.

Non-compliant providers may be subject to corrective action and/or termination from the network, as follows:

- A non-compliance letter will be sent to the provider.
- The non-compliant provider will be re-surveyed within 60 days after the infraction.

**If you have any questions, please contact your Provider Network Account Executive or call Provider Services at 202-408-2237 or toll free at 1-888-656-2383.**