



601 12th Street
Oakland, CA 94607

October 13, 2023

Subject: Notification of January 2024 Updates to the Blue Shield *Medical Interface Manual*

Dear IPA/medical group:

Blue Shield is revising the *Medical Interface Manual* (Manual). The changes in each provider manual section listed below are effective January 1, 2024.

On that date, you can search and download the revised manual on Provider Connection at www.blueshieldca.com/provider in the *Provider Manuals* section under *Guidelines & resources*.

This Manual details Blue Shield's protocols for coordinating the treatment of mental health and substance use disorders between behavioral health providers managed by the Blue Shield mental health service administrator (MHSA) and primary care physicians and is a resource for providing integrated care.

The *Medical Interface Manual* is included by reference in the agreement between Blue Shield of California (Blue Shield) and those IPAs and medical groups contracted with Blue Shield. If a conflict arises between the *Medical Interface Manual* and the agreement held by the IPA or medical group and Blue Shield, the agreement prevails.

If you have any questions regarding this notice or about the revisions that will be published in the January 2024 version of this Manual, please contact your Blue Shield Provider Relations Coordinator.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aliza Arjoyan".

Aliza Arjoyan
Senior Vice President
Provider Partnerships and Network Management

Section 2: Medical Care Solutions Interface Procedures

B. Triage Guidelines

Added/removed language in boldface and strikethrough type below:

1. **Place of service - medical / surgical v. Behavioral Health unit / facility**

Based on the place of service (medical/surgical ~~floor~~**setting** vs behavioral health unit/facility), Blue Shield MHSA assumes responsibility for coverage of behavioral health professional services. Below are common scenarios of responsible party coverage:

- Facility charges related to medical treatment in a medical/surgical setting (ambulatory or inpatient) for the treatment of gender **affirming care**~~dysphoria~~, eating disorder, ~~or~~ substance use disorder, **or medical stabilization as a result of a mental health condition** are the responsibility of **Blue Shield or** the IPA/medical group regardless of mental health diagnosis. Blue Shield and the IPA/medical group will be responsible for the care management and assume financial responsibility provided to the member depending on the contract.

2. **Type of professional (attending, consultant) primary care / medical – surgical v. Behavioral Health**

Blue Shield MHSA assumes responsibility for coverage of professional services rendered by in-network MHSA Behavioral Health providers **or out of network providers when access to care or continuity of care applies**. Below are common scenarios of coverage responsibility:

- If a Behavioral Health consultation is required in a medical/surgical setting, Blue Shield MHSA will assume the care management and financial responsibility of the consultative service, including special procedures, and tests associated with the Blue Shield MHSA consultative service.
- If the Behavioral Health consultant identifies a condition may have an organic component that would require formal diagnostic tests (e.g., EEG, MRI, CAT SCAN, EKG, Genetic Testing, etc.), these tests would continue to be the responsibility of **Blue Shield or** the IPA/medical group and requires the express authorization of **Blue Shield or** the member's IPA/medical group **as required under the member Plan benefit**.

3. **Primary clinical condition / focus of Outpatient Behavioral Health treatment**

Payment for outpatient behavioral health services are subject to eligibility at the time of service, benefit limitations, medical policies, and prior authorization, if applicable. Below is a common scenario of coverage responsibility:

As an example, if a member has a traumatic head injury with cognitive changes resulting in a mental health disturbance, Blue Shield MHSA, where appropriate, requires notification and preauthorization. Blue Shield MHSA will assume responsibility for mental health services provided by Blue Shield MHSA psychiatrist/ psychologist/ behavioral specialist. ~~Treatment for moderate to severe traumatic brain injury (TBI) must be coordinated with the neurologist since the etiology of the behavioral changes may be related to structural changes in the brain.~~

C. Covered MHSA Services

Added/removed language within following bullet points in boldface and strikethrough type below:

Description of Services	Services Included
Emergency Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behavioral Health consultations. Blue Shield MHSA will cover emergency screening exams as required by Health & Safety Code § 1371.4. All other emergency room professional, technical, and facility charges are excluded from MHSA responsibility.
Outpatient Mental Health/ Substance Use Disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After completion of a comprehensive Behavioral Health evaluation and neurological evaluation, if the Behavioral Health provider or neurologist determines the neuropsychological testing is required, the provider will request authorization and coordinate the request. Blue Shield MHSA will cover Neuropsychological testing when the purpose of testing is to clarify whether there is a psychiatric diagnosis (even when medical conditions are present) Behavioral Health counseling and other behavioral services related to the care of transgender/trans-sexual population gender affirming care.

D. Common Interface Scenarios and Examples

Added language in boldface type below. *Removed* the clinical situation "Head injury with cognitive changes."

Clinical Situation	Place of Service	Provider Type	Primary Diagnosis	Responsibility
Individual dependent on opioids	Office-Based Opioid Treatment	Licensed Physician with DEA waiver to prescribe buprenorphine	Substance Use Disorder with or without Mental Health comorbidity	Blue Shield MHSA when provided by an MHSA in-network Behavioral Health clinician or with MHSA prior authorization. Blue Shield/IPA when provided by an MHSA out-of-network Behavioral Health clinician or non-Behavioral Health Licensed Physician unless access to care applies.
Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) which is medically necessary and for FDA approved indications.	Physician's office	Licensed Physician with university-based training in TMS	Major Depressive Disorder, Severe	Blue Shield MHSA when provided by an MHSA in-network Behavioral Health clinician or with MHSA prior authorization. Blue Shield/IPA when provided by an MHSA out-of-network Behavioral Health clinician or non-Behavioral Health Licensed Physician unless access to care applies.
Acute medical detoxification	Blue Shield approved detox bed or unit in a general acute care facility	Medical/ surgical or psychiatrist/ addiction specialist	Medical diagnosis, such as: Acute alcohol withdrawal, acute benzodiazepine withdrawal, delirium tremens, seizures due to substance withdrawal	Blue Shield/IPA Exception: Blue Shield MHSA approved Behavioral Health services (inpatient consultation, and special procedures, and tests associated with the Blue Shield MHSA authorized consultative service) unless access to care applies.

Clinical Situation	Place of Service	Provider Type	Primary Diagnosis	Responsibility
Behavioral Health management of an acute Behavioral Health disorder with delirium, dementia, or amnesia (inpatient consultation, psychotherapy, biofeedback, neuropsychological testing, etc.)	Blue Shield MHSA approved mental health services in a Medical facility, clinic, or mental health specialist office	Blue Shield MHSA psychiatrist/psychologist/Behavioral Health specialist	Behavioral Health	Blue Shield MHSA It is the responsibility of the Blue Shield/ IPA to rule out medical etiology.
Anorexia/bulimia – with medical complications	Medical/surgical facility or clinic	Nutritional counselor or Medical/surgical	Medical/ surgical or Mental Health	Blue Shield/IPA
Required Mental Health consultation prior to surgical procedure when not coordinated directly with Blue Shield MHSA and services provided by a provider not contracted with Magellan unless access to care applies	Office based	Psychiatrist/ Psychologist/ Behavioral Health specialist	Medical	Blue Shield/IPA

E. Co-Management Procedures

Updated the following procedures that Blue Shield and Blue Shield MHSA co-manage for members with a Behavioral Health diagnosis as well as a medical diagnosis, in boldface type below:

3. For members with a primary medical diagnosis who are undergoing a surgical procedure and require a mental health workup as part of the routine pre-surgical evaluation (e.g., gastrointestinal bypass, transplant, etc.), **Blue Shield/**IPA will arrange for Blue Shield MHSA authorization for the mental health consultation.
8. Diagnostic tests ordered/administered by the MHSA Behavioral Health provider, without the express authorization of **Blue Shield/**IPA, shall be the financial responsibility of Blue Shield MHSA. (The mental health provider shall direct members to preferred diagnostic centers per the member’s **required network**.)
9. All medical consultations at any level of care will be coordinated through **Blue Shield** or the member’s IPA/medical group. Failure to do so will result in Blue Shield MHSA being financially responsible for the consultative services. When contacted, **Blue Shield** or the IPA/medical group will authorize and identify appropriate medical consultants when medically necessary. The mental health provider shall seek authorization from **Blue Shield** or the IPA/ medical group for medical diagnostic evaluations prior to their ordering. If the medical consultant does not have medical staff privileges at the Behavioral Health facility, **Blue Shield** or the IPA/medical group must make appropriate arrangements for a medical consult at their expense.

Section 5: Frequently Asked Questions

Updated in boldface type below:

3. Are laboratory tests, to determine blood levels of psychotropic medications, covered by Blue Shield/IPA or Blue Shield MHSA?

Outpatient laboratory tests (excluding genetic/DNA testing for antidepressant medication) ordered in the interest of the psychiatrist's management of the mental health member, such as psychotropic medication (e.g., lithium and depakote) levels without express authorization of the members' IPA/medical group are the financial responsibility of Blue Shield MHSA.

Laboratory tests ordered by a psychiatrist while the member is hospitalized in a psychiatric facility will be covered under the mental health benefit and managed by Blue Shield MHSA, unless the tests have been authorized by **Blue Shield** or the member's IPA/medical group.

Section 7: Contact Numbers for Physicians

Updated the Blue Shield Behavioral Health Medical Director and contact information as follows:

Matthew Geromi, DO

(562) 580-6715

matthew.geromi@blueshieldca.com

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