

Associated Billing Center's  
**Newsletter**

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**Exclusively Serving Mental Health Practices Nationwide**  
**Building Our Reputation One Client at a Time**

Web: [mentalhealthbillers.com](http://mentalhealthbillers.com)

### A Message From Mona



There are many aspects of my job that I truly enjoy. Speaking to our providers and exchanging ideas and thoughts is among the most enjoyable. I am often asked questions concerning the daily management of a mental health practice. These questions surround Revenue Cycle Management, balance billing, marketing, and patient communication concerning their fiduciary responsibility.

When you engage **Associated Billing Center** as your billing and support staff, we are here to intercede on your behalf for all patient inquiries concerning billing, deductibles and copays. Many therapists feel much more comfortable practicing their craft rather than discussing "money issues" with their patients.

Another topic of discussion concerns solo practitioners who are contemplating managing a group practice. While expanding your practice could prove to be a lucrative idea, there are several serious issues that need to be closely examined. The challenges include scheduling the time to manage your practice, budgeting for increased expenses (office space-added liability insurance-payroll, etc.) while protecting your brand and the quality of therapy you provide. Remember, the "back end" needs to be in place before transitioning. We're always here to help.

The benefits of transitioning to a group practice include specialty diversification, possible increased revenue and a bigger footprint in your marketplace. When deciding on solo or group, the number one question is what size shoe fits you the most comfortably.

**STAY SAFE. STAY HEALTHY.**



Mona

### Education Box-You Need to Know



#### **Cigna Update**

- Interim virtual care accommodations (telehealth) related to COVID-19 remains in effect until further notice.
- Oxford has extended cost share for NJ policies until September 10, 2021. NY ended on June 4, 2021 but there is a legislative attempt to extend cost sharing in the state.

#### **Associated Billing Center Reminders:**

- Regardless of network status, remember to list all patient payments (copays/copayments/deductibles) on your day sheets.
- Avoid delays in claims processing and payment. When submitting Patient Profile forms (2 pages) for new clients, complete the form in its entirety. If you need an **Associated Billing Center** Patient Profile template, please contact us and we will gladly forward one.
- When submitting day sheets, please specify whether the therapy session was in office or virtual.
- Any changes or updates to fee charges needs to be sent to us in writing for documentation purposes.

#### **Knowledge is Power**

- Congress is debating *The Improving Access to Mental Health Act*. The legislation advocates for:
  - Increase in the reimbursement rate for social workers accepting Medicare from 75% to 85% of the physician fee schedule.
  - Allowing therapists to provide and bill Medicare for Health and Behavior Assessment and Intervention services that help clients manage physical health problems.
  - Allow billing to Medicare for clinical services to residents in skilled nursing facilities.To advocate for the above legislation, contact your Congressional Representatives.

## Mental Health Practice Potpourri



▪The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) reports that more than 47 million American adults are experiencing a mental illness and yet 57 percent of adults are receiving no treatment. Jennifer Snow, Director of Public Policy at NAMI, notes that one contributing factor is that there is a severe shortage of mental health professionals across the country. She draws the analogy to 60 percent of counties in the United States not having access to cancer care. She also says that younger generations are more comfortable talking about their mental health concerns. Also, more people have sought therapy because of the pandemic.

▪The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology reports that some examples of health information that are not covered by HIPAA include health information that patients:

- Store in a mobile app or on a mobile device, such as a smartphone or tablet.
- Share over social media websites or health-related online communities such as message boards.
- Store in a personal health record (PHR) that is not offered through a health provider or health plan covered by HIPAA.

▪The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released new enrollment reports showing more than two million people have signed up for health coverage during the Biden-Harris Administration's 2021 Special Enrollment Period (SEP), which opened on February 15, 2021 as the country grappled with the pandemic and will conclude on the extended deadline August 15, 2021.

▪The Kaiser Family Foundation reports that over 20 percent of school-aged children have experienced worsened mental or emotional health since the pandemic began.

▪Therapists who see 30 clients per week often refer to this as a fulltime caseload because it mimics a 40-hour workweek after factoring in notes, emails and patient communication. Set your own comfort zone and income trajectory. Following the "norm" may not be appropriate for you.

## Laugh a Little or Maybe a Lot: It's Good Therapy



▪Did you know that headaches are purely psychological? Yeah, they're all in your head!

▪A mathematician is given a psychological test. The first question asked, "You see a burning house and a hose disconnected from a fire hydrant. What do you do?" After much deliberation, the mathematician decides he would attach the hose to the hydrant. He is then asked, "You see a non-burning house and hose disconnected from a fire hydrant. What do you do?" to which the mathematician immediately responds, "I'll set the house on fire to reduce this to a problem I've already solved."

▪A General noticed one of his soldiers behaving oddly. The soldier would pick up any piece of paper he found, frown and say, "That's not it" and put it down again. This went on for some time, until the General arranged to have the soldier psychologically tested. The psychologist concluded that the soldier was deranged and wrote out his discharge from the army. The soldier picked it up, smiled and said, "That's it."

▪What do you call a scientific talk about the psychological impact of cannibalism? A Hannibal Lecture.

▪I'm on my way to get a psychological evaluation for a new job. Why does everyone keep wishing me luck?

▪My therapist asked me if anyone else suffered from mental illness in my family. I answered "No, they all seem to enjoy it."

▪I recently read that it's beneficial to your mental well-being to share your bed with your pets...but in hindsight, I probably should have left them in the aquarium.

Source: [upjoke.com/mental-health-jokes](http://upjoke.com/mental-health-jokes)



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Thanks for your positive reaction to this monthly Newsletter. We very much look forward to your feedback and story suggestions.

## Mental Health Practices Competing for Patients



### **Yes, Your Practice is Your Business**

Individuals seeking mental health therapy are much like consumers of tangible products. When a prospective client calls, think about the questions they ask. How much do you charge for therapy, what is your availability, do you accept my insurance and what are your specialties? Therapists may not think of themselves as a competitive commodity but many prospective patients view their services as a product. In previous **A**ssociated **B**illing **C**enter Newsletters, we have emphasized the importance of thinking about your practice's reputation in terms of a JD Power survey. Asking your patients intermittently about the degree of therapy satisfaction could prevent you from losing a client, solidify your relationship with that person, and/or provide you with focus group feedback after aggregating their responses.

### **Creating a Digital Presence**

Creating a simple website describing your services and specialty areas may not be as difficult as you think. Many website builder platforms (GoDaddy, WordPress, WIX, Weebly, Site123) offer templates. Want instant credibility in the marketplace? Create a website or decide on a budget and have one built for you. No huge investment required here.

## Stories You Simply Need to Know About



✓ "We're human, too". These words are among the most powerful statements coming from the most decorated active gymnast in the world. Simone Biles prioritized her well-being over competing in every scheduled event in the Summer Olympics in Tokyo. Biles withdrew from a team final and individual all-around competition because she had to, "Do what's right for me and focus on my mental health." Biles stated, "We also have to focus on ourselves because, at the end of the day, we're human, too. So, we have to protect our mind and our body rather than just go out there and do what the world wants us to do." She continued, "It's honestly petrifying trying to do a skill but not having your mind and body in sync." Biles has become a world model for mental health awareness. Biles is not alone in the high-profile arena of those who have discussed their mental health challenges. Others include: Chrissy Teigen, Demi Lovato, Steve Young, Donny Osmond, Michael Phelps, Leonardo DiCaprio, Lady Gaga and Adele.



✓ We've all heard the phrase *what's good for the goose is good for the gander*. Now comes a new twist on the saying. *What's good for the hot dog is good for the bun*. Heinz recently launched its new "Hot Dog Pact" campaign rallying for 10 wieners, 10 buns. An actual on-line petition is calling for bakers and hot dog makers to come to an agreement on the packaging of wieners and rolls. Here's the dilemma. Normally you will find 8 hot dogs (we're not talking Costco here) in a package and 10 rolls. The mismatch was recognized years ago. In fact, it was the topic of a scene in the 1991 movie, "Father of the Bride".



√Even Ripley may have a tough time believing this one! A new study from Ohio State University says that some people who enter adulthood at a normal weight and start to pack on the pounds later in life actually live longer. (Yes, this is one of those stories that advises you to check with your doctor first). Associate Professor of Sociology, Hui Zheng, and his team looked at two generations of Americans, following the residents of one city in Massachusetts and their children for nearly 70 years. Their findings reveal young adults with a healthy body mass index (BMI) who gradually become overweight — but never obese — have the greatest lifespans. On the other hand, (Yes, there is the other hand), the dangers of obesity remained constant throughout the study. Children who began adulthood already obese and continued to gain weight had the highest mortality rates.

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