

From: DMHC Licensing eFiling

Subject: APL 24-022 – Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative, Certified Wellness Coaches

Date: Friday, December 13, 2024 8:37 AM

Attachments: APL 24-022 Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative, Certified Wellness Coaches

Dear Health Plan Representative:

The Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC), together with the Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), issues this All-Plan Letter (APL) 24-022 - Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative, Certified Wellness Coaches to provide health care service plans with information regarding the establishment of the state Wellness Coach certification program and encourage health plans to provide access to Wellness Coach services as a means of increasing behavioral health resources to health plan members.

Thank you.

ALL PLAN LETTER

DATE: December 13, 2024

TO: All Commercials Full-Service Health Care Service Plans and Behavioral Health Care Service Plans

FROM: Mary Watanabe, Director, Department of Managed Health Care
Elizabeth A. Landsberg, Director, Department of Health Care Access and Information

SUBJECT: APL 24-022 – Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative, Certified Wellness Coaches

The Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC), together with the Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), issues this All-Plan Letter (APL) to provide health care service plans with information regarding the establishment of the state Wellness Coach certification program and encourage health plans to provide access to Wellness Coach services as a means of increasing behavioral health resources to health plan members.

AB 133 (Committee on Budget, Chapter 143, Statutes of 2021) established the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI), part of the Master Plan for Kids' Mental Health. Among its many components designed to reimagine and transform the way children and youth are supported in their mental health needs, the CYBHI introduced a new category of behavioral health providers, the Certified Wellness Coach, in its directive to HCAI to assist in expanding the supply of behavioral health providers.¹ HCAI is tasked with developing and implementing the Certified Wellness Coach profession.

Certified Wellness Coaches augment school behavioral health resources provided by psychologists, school counselors, school social workers and clinical staff in schools, school-based and school-linked public and community-based service organizations, health centers, and other related child- and youth-serving organizations.

¹ Health and Safety Code sec. 127825; Although referenced in statute as "behavioral health coach," HCAI's implementation of this provision adopted the title of "Wellness Coach" for this new category of professional.

By addressing behavioral health needs before a child or youth requires clinical services, Certified Wellness Coaches will serve to increase access to pre-clinical behavioral health services. An important impetus for this new profession is to reduce the demand placed on limited and often inadequate clinical service resources in these settings.

The scope of services provided by Certified Wellness Coaches is limited to prevention and early intervention behavioral health services to children and youth through age 25 and their families. Certified Wellness Coaches provide a variety of services, including wellness promotion and education, behavioral health screening, care coordination and extension, individual and group support, and crisis referrals. They work with individuals on goal setting, planning and psychosocial skills (e.g., sleep hygiene, increasing movement, problem solving, stress management, time management, and coping skills).

Certification application and scope of service standards for different categories/levels of Wellness Coaches have been established by HCAI and both work- and education-based pathways to certification are available. Certified Wellness Coaches are among the authorized providers for specified services listed in the CYBHI school site fee-for-service reimbursement fee schedule. As of October 2024, HCAI has certified several hundred Wellness Coaches with additional individuals becoming certified each month.

Health care service plans are already required to cover Certified Wellness Coach services pursuant to the CYBHI Fee Schedule program for school-linked services, as determined by the Department of Health Care Services.² Health care service plans are encouraged to consider the value of utilizing the Certified Wellness Coach in other settings as a profession that can assist plans in carrying out prevention and early intervention services and potentially reduce the demand for clinical services.

The DMHC and HCAI recommend that health plans review the resources linked below and explore ways to integrate the use of Certified Wellness Coaches into their processes and settings where the health plan delivers behavioral health care to its members.

Certified Wellness Coach information and resources can be found at the following websites:

- hcai.ca.gov/workforce/initiatives/certified-wellness-coach

Department of Health Care Access and Information's main website with information about the Wellness Coach program, available grants, and links to additional resources

- cawellnesscoach.org

Website with Wellness Coach certification application and information for Wellness Coach employers and education programs.

² See [DMHC APL 23-026](#).