



BHSD Communication

March 30, 2020

To all Behavioral Health providers offering services in the State of New Mexico

During this period of extraordinary emergency that all of us are facing due to the novel corona virus, it is more important than ever to continue to make available the unique support, guidance, therapy, and direction, to all of our neighbors, that Behavioral Health professionals are trained to deliver. As Secretary David Scrase, MD wrote: "Behavioral Health services are MORE essential than ever."

So, to clarify confusion that we know has arisen due to mixed and less than clear messages: Behavioral Health providers are deemed ESSENTIAL health care service providers under the Directives of the Governor and Secretary of Health in New Mexico.

At the same time, we know that the emergency makes it challenging to deliver those services in a safe face to face manner. This is precisely why the Medicaid Letter of Direction #30 – and the accompanying directives to Falling Colors, governing State Funded non-Medicaid services, as well as the Directive from Russell Toal, Superintendent of Insurance to private insurers – opens up payment for services rendered telephonically or via other simultaneous electronic means for the vast majority of behavioral health services at the same rate as for face to face services.

If services can be provided electronically, that is the way they should be delivered.

My own experience as a provider of telehealth services for many years here in New Mexico made clear that training for effective delivery goes a long way to assuring the quality of service delivery. Such training is readily available through, among other sources, the Southwest Telehealth Resource Center (<https://southwesttrc.org>). I encourage you to avail yourself of some training for your practitioners delivering services remotely.

I am personally extraordinarily grateful for, and inspired by, the efforts so many of you have made to deliver these ESSENTIAL services to all our neighbors, and request that you continue to do so. If conditions have arisen that make that impossible, please let BHSD, your MCOs or other insurers, and Medicaid know about the situation so that we can explore possible solutions.

To access the LODs and Directive from OSI:

<https://www.hsd.state.nm.us/providers/communication-to-bh-providers-1.aspx>

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Neal A. Bowen, PhD".

Neal A. Bowen, PhD
Director,
Behavioral Health Services Division