



## Improving health plan directories for members seeking mental health services

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Since the onset of COVID-19, the demand for mental health services has increased sharply across the US. Last year, [62 percent of psychologists](#) reported receiving more referrals than the previous year—up from 37 percent in 2020. Additionally, 68 percent of practitioners with a waitlist reported that the number of people waiting for an appointment had grown since the start of the pandemic.

However, while many mental health providers do not—or no longer—accept commercial insurance, some still appear in health plan’s provider directories. For patients seeking behavioral health services, this means that after struggling to find a provider and/or waiting on a list for an appointment, they then may receive surprise medical bills.

### THE IMPACT ON MEMBERS

In the United States, the average cost of psychotherapy ranges from [\\$100 to \\$200 per session](#), depending on the state. At the same time, these services are up to [six times more likely](#) than general medical services to be delivered by an out-of-network provider.

Often, members rely on health plan provider directories to identify-in network providers. In fact, 44 percent of privately insured patients used a directory when seeking mental health treatment.

Of that group, [53 percent encountered directory inaccuracies](#). These patients were twice as likely to be treated by an out-of-network provider, and four times more likely to receive a surprise outpatient bill for out-of-network treatment.

Despite ongoing efforts, maintaining accurate health plan directory data has been a long-standing challenge for both payers and providers. However, it is often members who end up paying the largest price.

### A BETTER EXPERIENCE

DirectAssure<sup>®</sup>, a CAQH solution developed in collaboration with CAQH member health plans, helps payers maintain and improve the accuracy of provider directories and meet requirements of the No Surprises Act, 2021.

Working in concert with CAQH ProView<sup>®</sup>, the industry standard for self-reported provider data that is relied on by more than 1.9 million providers and 1,000 health plans, DirectAssure streamlines data collection by enabling practitioners to update their directory information once and share it with all participating health plans authorized to receive the data.

To simplify the process, directory-related questions are included while providers enter information in their CAQH Proview user profiles. Users are also shown previously captured practice location data to update, confirm or discard. This approach ensures data accuracy and quality.

To help plans and physician practices comply with the No Surprises Act, DirectAssure was enhanced to remind providers to update, submit and confirm their practice information every 90-days. The practice location screens within CAQH ProView also now highlight the date the practice location record was last confirmed. This makes it easier for health plans to discern how up-to-date the information is, and take any necessary action.

If a provider's practice location record has not been reviewed or updated in the last 60 days, he or she will be alerted to confirm if the information is still accurate.

The combination of these features give providers increased visibility into their directory information, clear expectations about what needs to be updated by when and the ability to do so quickly. This helps to ensure that changes can be made in a timely manner and minimizes the potential for a member to unexpectedly visit an out-of-network provider.

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## Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Health-Plans/ManagedCareMarketing>
- 2 <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/3630/text>

To learn more about how DirectAssure is helping health plans improve the experience for members seeking mental health services and reduce the risk of unexpected bills, contact [DirectAssureInfo@CAQH.org](mailto:DirectAssureInfo@CAQH.org).