November, 2020

TO: Insurance Companies who cover Psychological and Behavioral Health Services

RE: Inclusion of Licensed Psychological Associates as Providers

To Whom It May Concern:

 There has been a small change in the Texas Insurance Code which we believe you will consider to be Good News. It may benefit your company by giving you

* Greater choice of providers for psychological services
* Providers who will bring a significant cost savings for Psychological and Behavioral Health services.

The current Texas Insurance Code refers to Licensed Psychological Associates in the following sections:

* Sec. 1451.001. DEFINITIONS; HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONERS. In this

chapter: …

(18) "Psychological associate" means an individual licensed as a psychological

 associate by the Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council.

* Sec. 1451.123. SELECTION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATE. An insured may select a psychological associate to provide the services scheduled in the health insurance policy that are within the scope of the associate's license.

Licensed Psychological Associates have been included as Providers in the Texas Insurance Code for many years, but under the “minimal” supervision by a Licensed Psychologist. The Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (TSBEP)\* has recognized the inequities that such a provision created and has removed it, allowing qualified Licensed Psychological Associates to practice psychology without the outdated and unneeded restrictions brought about by being tethered to a Licensed Psychologist.

However as sometimes happens, agency rulemaking can outpace the response from other agencies. That is why we want to call your attention to the change in the Texas Insurance Code which now reflects the change made by the TSBEP in December, 2017.

Since the Psychology Act was passed in 1969, Licensed Psychological Associates have been given the right to practice the full range of psychological services, including psycholo-gical assessment, psychological therapy and behavioral health services with only a few unrelated exceptions†. Licensed Psychological Associates have a minimum of a Masters degree in Psychology, have passed the professional and jurisprudence exams required by the TSBEP, and have completed the supervised experience requirements needed for practice. Like all licensees of the TSBEP, Licensed Psychological Associates must practice only in their areas of competence.

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As referenced above, Licensed Psychological Associates have been included in the Texas Insurance Code for many years, but under the supervision of a Licensed Psychologist. That “super-vision” has been described as “minimal” by statute for over two decades. This created a situation where “minimal” supervision could have been only a signature on a report which had been created by a Licensed Psychological Associate to reflect their own work, but it was then required to be billed under the Licensed Psychologist’s Provider Identifier Number. With the change to the Texas Insurance Code that will no longer be the case. Licensed Psychological Associates now may be reimbursed for their own work. Reimbursement rates for Licensed Psychological Associates are usually comparable to that for other Masters-degreed providers, such as Licensed Professional Counselors.

Thank you for your attention to these matters and to the benefits we think Licensed Psychological Associates could bring to those you insure and to your company, as well.

If you have any questions, please email Betty Dawson, MA, Licensed Psychological Associate, Secretary – TAPA at txapa@att.net

\*The Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (TSBEP) is now a part of the Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council (BHEC) at [www.bhec.texas.gov](http://www.bhec.texas.gov).

† These are the only psychological services which Licensed Psychological Associates are limited from providing. The relevant statutes and regulations governing child custody or adoption evaluations, competency or insanity evaluations, or fitness-for-duty evaluations for law enforcement personnel state that licensed psychologists are the only providers licensed by the TSBEP who are permitted to conduct those evaluations. Additionally, only licensed psychologists may sign the *Declaration of Psychological and Emotional Health* form required for any individual seeking a personal protection endorsement under 37 TAC §35.91. These are not restrictions in the Psychology Act, and we are working to change these obsolete and unwarranted provisions.