

Justification for Increased Reimbursement for Clinically Addressing Challenging Behaviors

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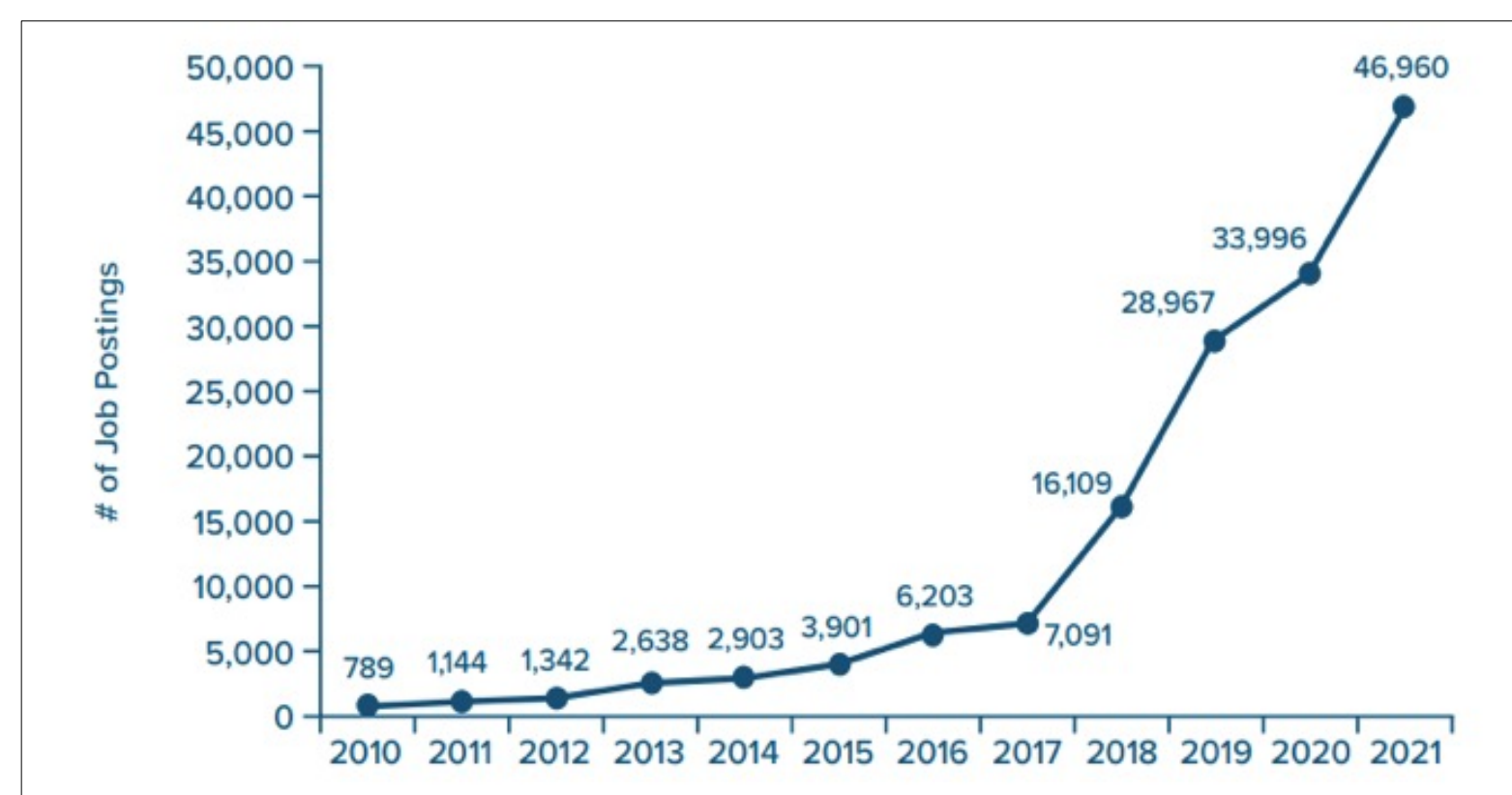


Abstract

- Board Certified Behavioral Analysis (BCBA) is a widely recognized, evidence-based approach, to treating individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other developmental disabilities. In Iowa, BCBA services are reimbursed through the use of Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) billing codes. This research summary aims to provide an overview of the utilization of BCBA CPT billing codes in Iowa, including the types of services provided, reimbursement rates, and barriers to access.

Background

- University of Iowa Hospital and Clinics (UIHC) Day Treatment (DT) Clinic's payor mix consists of primarily four payor's all with different billing requirements.
 - Iowa Medicaid and MCOs (Iowa Total Care)
 - Amerigroup (Private)
 - Wellmark/Blue Cross Blue Shield
 - Commercial
 - United Behavioral Health/Optum BH Solutions
- The figure below, by MasterABA.com, outlines the increased demand for CBAs from 2010 to 2021 across the country.



In 2010 there was a demand for 789 specialists and in 2021, there was a demand of 46,960 specialists.

Methods

- A comprehensive review of relevant literature, government reports, and reimbursement data was conducted to gather information on the use of BCBA CPT billing codes in Iowa. Primary sources of data included Iowa Medicaid billing records, Iowa Department of Public Health reports, and published studies on BCBA services in Iowa.
- Observations of DT, including stakeholder interviews and chart reviews.

Current State

- CBAs practice under Psychologist/MD and this has been the current state since approximately 2014-2016 discussions with Magellan Health. Psychologist bills alone.
- Billing became this model because DT is more intense than standard outpatient, so it has always been a Physician Health Payment (PHP) per contract.
- General template of a patient visit:**
 - Interview before first appointment
 - Assessment of the behavior for one week
 - Second week is treatment
 - If patient shows quick results, then patient can move into treatment phase quicker
 - Discharge on day 10 of clinic (patient can do another 10-day clinic cycle if needed)
 - Re-education (follow-ups) with Psychologist, patient and family after discharge
 - Multi-page report is produced as a result, which is distributed to patient/family, school, work, etc.
- Clinic model:**
 - 2 patients per day; each 3.5-hour appointments
 - Each patient spends 2 weeks with clinic
 - Clinic is booked out up to 2 years in advance
 - Cancellations and no-shows prove to be challenging
- Current CPT billing codes (not conclusive):**
 - S9480 (intensive outpatient psych services, per diem)
 - 90837 (60-minute psychotherapy)
 - 90785 (Interactive complexity)
 - 90847 (Psychotherapy with patient)
- Things not being billed under current billing model:**
 - Interview before first appointment
 - Re-education (follow-ups) with Psychologist, patient and family after discharge
 - Multi-page report writing; documentation

Ideal State

- Keep current clinical model but allow for CBAs to bill independently for interview before first appointment, re-education, and the report writing.
- Increased reimbursement for DT (average reimbursement is 37.4%)
- Become licensed BCBA-D to allow for higher reimbursement for the DT and to allow CBAs to bill more independently

Summary/Recommendations

- Results**
 - The utilization of BCBA CPT billing codes in Iowa has increased steadily over the past decade, reflecting a growing demand for BCBA services. Commonly used CPT codes include 97153 (adaptive behavior treatment by protocol), 97155 (group adaptive behavior treatment), and 97156 (family adaptive behavior treatment guidance).
 - Reimbursement rates for BCBA services in Iowa vary depending on the payer. For example, Iowa Medicaid reimburses BCBA services based on a fee schedule, which specifies the allowable rates for each CPT code. Private insurance companies may have their own reimbursement rates, which can vary widely. On average, reimbursement rates for BCBA services in Iowa range from 37.4%, depending on the complexity of the services provided and the qualifications of the provider (IDHS, 2022).
- Recommendations**
 - Build in more opportunities for follow-ups
 - Follow-ups usually occur on breaks, if patients cancel or no-show, outside of patient appointments, etc.; not much time for follow-ups
 - Re-negotiate payor contracts with Wellmark, United, and Iowa Medicaid and MCOs
 - Continue evaluation to allow CBAs to bill independently
 - Evaluate billing autism specific codes since 75% of patients have autism (97151, 97152, 97153, 97156, or G9012)
 - Bill the following CPT codes for the interview prior to first appointment (According to CMS):
 - 98970 (Qualified nonphysician healthcare professional online digital evaluation 5-10 minutes)
 - 98971 (Qualified nonphysician healthcare professional online digital evaluation 11-20 minutes)
 - 98972 (Qualified nonphysician healthcare professional online digital evaluation 21+ minutes)

Sources

- 2021 annual update to the Therapy Code List - Centers for Medicare ... 2021 Annual Update to the Therapy Code List. (2020, December 31). Retrieved April 10, 2023, from <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/mm12126.pdf>.
- Dalphonse, A. (2023, January 12). *Board Certified Behavior Analyst Certification: Complete Guide*. Master ABA. Retrieved April 11, 2023, from <https://masteraba.com/board-certified-behavior-analyst-certification-complete-guide/>
- Medicaid Provider Manual: Board Certified Behavioral Analyst (BCBA). Iowa Department of Human Services (IDHS). (2022). Retrieved April 10, 2023, from <https://dhs.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/BCBAMedicaidProviderManual.pdf>