



ASSOCIATION  
FOR BEHAVIORAL  
HEALTHCARE



We hope this message finds you well. As we embark on a new edition of our eUpdate, we're thrilled to welcome you to another round of engaging content and updates that matter. Thank you for being part of our community. Your feedback and suggestions are invaluable to us. Feel free to reach out and let us know what topics you'd like us to cover or if there's anything specific you'd like to see in future editions.

## This Month's eUpdate

Every month, ABH compiles important information and resources to keep you updated and informed. Here is a glimpse of what you can expect in this month's eUpdate:

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**ABH Salute to Excellence: Registration Now Open!**



DREAM...BELIEVE...ACHIEVE



Friday, October 25th, 2024 from 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
Sheraton Framingham Hotel & Conference Center

ABH's [Salute to Excellence](#) is a celebratory day when we recognize individuals and groups, with an emphasis on clinical and direct care staff, who have made outstanding contributions to community-based behavioral healthcare in Massachusetts. This year's celebration will take place at the [Sheraton Framingham Hotel & Conference Center](#) from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The event program will begin promptly at 9:00 a.m.

#### Registration

Registration for ABH's 2024 Salute to Excellence is now open! [Click here to register](#), and join us in congratulating this year's Salute to Excellence Award winners. The deadline to register is Friday, October 11.

#### Sponsorships

We are offering various sponsorship, exhibitor, and advertisement opportunities for this year's Salute to Excellence. Click [here to access](#) our 2024 Sponsor and Vendor Opportunities Information packet and click [here](#) to access our online form.

#### Nominations

Do you know anyone who should be recognized for their outstanding work? If your answer is **YES**, then you should nominate them for recognition at ABH's Salute to Excellence. Nominating is easy! Just complete our online nomination form [here](#) by 5 pm on Monday,

**August 12.** If preferred, you may also download and fill out our [Salute to Excellence 2024 Nomination Form](#) and send the completed document to [Salutetoexcellence@abhmass.org](mailto:Salutetoexcellence@abhmass.org). If you would like to review an example of a successful nomination write up, [click here](#).

As a reminder, to be considered, nominees must be employed by an ABH member organization.

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## Advisory Ruling: Role of Nursing in Harm Reduction

The Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing recently passed an Advisory Ruling on Nursing Practice regarding the role of Nursing in Harm Reduction.

The Board takes the position that nursing practices are consistent with harm reduction and does not violate the Standards of Conduct found in 244 CMR 9.03 (7). Licensed nurses shall not be subject to disciplinary action solely for the provision of harm reduction supplies or services to patients, regardless of setting. Harm reduction supplies may include, but are not limited to, provision of opioid antagonists for overdose rescue, fentanyl test strips, sterile pipes, and sterile syringes to patients at discharge.

Many nurses supported the passage of this advisory that clarifies and affirms that engaging in harm reduction strategies with people with opioid use disorder or who use drugs does not jeopardize their nursing license or subject them to professional disciplinary actions.

The advisory is available [here](#).

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## MassHealth 2023 Books Closing

Some MassHealth plans have been notifying providers about “MassHealth 2023 books closing.” ABH confirmed that MassHealth recently added some flexibility to the timeline. Plans may now submit Rate Year (RY) 2023 encounters up to **September 30, 2024**. The calendar dates for RY23 are 4/1/23 – 12/31/23.

In previous correspondence from MassHealth, Plans were directed that they are contractually “required to submit complete, accurate, and timely encounter information on paid claims and related data by the deadline.”

Each plan has its own operational processes and may have different timelines and processes that providers may need to follow in order for plans to comply with the books closing deadline.

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### Plan Specific Information

#### Carelon for WellSense and Fallon Managed Care Entities

Carelon has notified ABH that claims **for this time period** will need to be **finalized** no later than **August 21, 2024**. Carelon urged providers to continue working with their assigned provider representative regarding claims. Any issues with 2023 dates of service should be brought to their attention as soon as possible and should include the following:

- Carelon claim ID
- Member ID number
- Procedure code

- Date of service

### **MBHP**

MBHP will not accept claims for 2023 service dates received after July 31, 2024 (*previously communicated*).

ABH is currently seeking information from other plans for specific dates.

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## **National Council Medical Director Institute Statement on Treatment Plan Documentation**

The National Council for Mental Wellbeing's Medical Director Institute has joined the American Association for Community Psychiatry (AACP) and American College of Physicians (ACP) in calling for a review and revision of the treatment plan documentation requirements across the nation.

The statement calls for changes and explains and highlights the flaws and negative impacts of "overly detailed and complicated treatment planning documentation (federal and state) requirements" on parity, workforce, administrative burden, patient/client engagement and communication, and delayed treatment.

Read the statement [here](#).

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## **Wellsense Insourcing Update**

WellSense is insourcing the management of their behavioral health benefit, effective January 1, 2026. One of the first steps in this effort is the initiation of the contracting effort with behavioral health providers.

WellSense is partnering with Andros to support in the building of the behavioral health network. Andros is a vendor assisting with the contracting process to ensure Wellsense is able to report an adequately contracted behavioral health network to regulators **by January 2025**. Andros will be sending contracts to providers who currently see WellSense members in late July/early August. While most providers can expect to be contacted by Andros, WellSense network strategy teams will be reaching out to larger hospital systems, community mental health centers and community behavioral health centers as applicable in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

As such, if providers have questions they should be directed to:

- Andros at (800) 894-0459 if they are outreached by Andros, or
- Back to their WellSense contact when outreached

Additionally, a link for a [Provider FAQ](#) will be shared with BH providers during the contracting process. The [Provider FAQ](#) will be a public webpage only (i.e., not a static document), as content will be updated periodically.

### **Note:**

*Wellsense became aware late last week that the outreach to providers via Andros did not include the FAQ link below and offered an August deadline to providers for contracting.*

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~~Andros has since sent a follow-up email late last week, inclusive of updated language around completion date and the AIC. While they do want to encourage completion of the packet as soon as possible, they do not want providers to be of the belief that if they cannot get their information into them by the end of August, they have missed their opportunity to serve Wellsense's membership.~~  
The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid have released the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (PFS) and Outpatient Prospective Payment System (OPPS) proposed rules for CY2025.

For a summary of the proposed changes, please click [here](#).

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**Save the Date!**  
**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights**  
**Safeguarding Health Information:**  
**Building Assurance Through HIPAA Security Conference**

**October 23–24, 2024**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) are excited to announce the return of the “Safeguarding Health Information: Building Assurance through HIPAA Security” conference for October 2024. After a 5-year absence, the conference is returning to Washington, D.C.

**Dates:** October 23–24, 2024

**Location:** HHS Headquarters (Hubert H. Humphrey Building) in Washington, D.C.

**Content:** The conference will explore the current healthcare cybersecurity landscape and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Security Rule. This event will highlight the present state of healthcare cybersecurity, and practical strategies, tips and techniques for implementing the HIPAA Security Rule. The Security Rule sets federal standards to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of electronic protected health information by requiring HIPAA covered entities and their business associates to implement and maintain administrative, physical and technical safeguards.

The conference will offer sessions that explore best practices in managing risks to and the technical assurance of electronic health information. Presentations will cover a variety of topics including managing cybersecurity risk and implementing practical cybersecurity solutions, understanding current cybersecurity threats to the healthcare community, cybersecurity considerations for the Internet of Things (IoT) in healthcare environments, updates from federal healthcare agencies, and more.

For more information, including registration, click [here](#).

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**ABH Analysis of the FY25 Budget: Governor’s Vetoes**

The House and Senate FY25 Budget Conference Committee filed its report on the evening of Thursday, July 18, 2024. The next day, in rare Friday sessions, both the House and Senate voted to approve the final budget compromise for the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) ([H. 4800](#)). The Conference Committee report proposes a \$58 billion budget that would increase spending by approximately \$1.97 billion, about 3.5% over the FY24 budget.

The Governor then returned her [vetoes](#) and amendments to the FY25 Conference Budget on July 29, cutting approximately \$317 million overall. With these reductions, the bottom line would be \$57.7 billion. This would be approximately \$1.7 billion, or about 3.1%, over the FY24 budget. An analysis of the Governor's changes is linked [here](#).

The FY25 Budget includes the following highlights:

#### **Department of Mental Health (DMH)**

- The Adult Community Services line item (5046-0000) is funded at \$622.4 million. This is a \$25.8 million increase compared to the FY24 final budget. The Governor reduced this line item to \$612,936,567. This is a \$9.5 million reduction from the conference budget. See details below.
- The Children's Services line item (5042-5000) is funded at \$131 million, including \$3.9 million for the Massachusetts Child Psychiatric Access Program (MCPAP) and MCPAP for Moms to address mental health needs of pregnant and postpartum women. This is an approximately \$9.9 million increase compared to the FY24 final budget.
- The State Psychiatric Hospital line-item (5095-0015) is funded at \$345,773,566. This is \$39.5 million below the Governor's proposal. It is a \$29.3 million decrease from the FY24 final budget. The Behavioral Health Outreach, Access, and Support Trust Fund line item (1595-4512) is recapitalized at \$20 million to support targeted behavioral health initiatives.

#### **Department of Public Health (DPH)/Bureau of Substance Addiction Services**

- The Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS) line item (4512-0200) is funded at \$212.6 million. This is an approximately \$4 million decrease compared to the FY24 final budget. The Governor reduced this line item to \$194.4 million. This is an \$18.2 million reduction from the conference budget.

#### **MassHealth**

- MassHealth is funded at approximately \$20.3 billion. The Governor reduced the MassHealth Managed Care line item (4000-0500) to \$5,903,992,394. This is a \$192.3 million reduction from the conference budget.

#### **Chapter 257 Rate Reserve (1599-6903)**

- The Chapter 257 rate reserve is funded at \$390 million. This is a \$217 million increase compared to the FY24 final budget.
  - It should be noted that when H.2 was released the Administration messaged that an additional \$95 million supported by an off-budget reserve would bring the total FY25 investment to \$485 million. The FY22 Economic Development Bond bill increased the Bureau of Labor Statistics benchmark from the 50th to the 53rd percentile and included \$125 million on a reserve to fund this increase in FY24 and FY25. The messaging was that H.2 assumed \$95 million of this reserve will be used to offset the projected Chapter 257 need in FY25.
  - The Conference Committee budget includes slightly revised language from the Senate budget for a report on the implementation of ongoing and proposed initiatives to promote equitable salaries for human service workers, direct care workers, nurses, clinicians or other comparable employees employed by state-operated human service providers and equitable rates paid to human service provider employees in community-based human services organizations funded by EOHHS, the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, or the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities.

Next Steps: The Legislature may override the Governor's vetoes with a 2/3 vote from each chamber.

NOTE: The General Appropriations Act (GAA) is the annual budget, effective each July 1st.

## September 2024 Committee Schedule

Friday, September 6

**Children's Services**, 10 a.m.

Monday, September 9

**Billing**, 10 a.m.

Tuesday, September 10

**ACCS**, 10 a.m.

Friday, September 13

**Corporate Compliance**, 10 a.m.

Tuesday, September 17

**OTP**, 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday, September 18

**Quality and Outcomes**, 10 a.m.

Thursday, September 19

**RRS/TSS**, 10 a.m.

Friday, September 20

**MID/DUIL/SOA**, 10 a.m.

Tuesday, September 24

**DEI&J**, 12 p.m.

Friday, September 27

**CBHI**, 10 a.m.

ABH's Committees are the "grassroots" of our organization. To learn more about ABH's Committees, [click here](#).

**Save the Date: NatCon25**



**May 5-7, 2025  
Philadelphia, PA**

NatCon25 is more than just an event. It's an opportunity to invest in yourself, your team and your organization alongside thousands of health care leaders.

NatCon25, the largest conference in mental health and substance use, offers three days of nonstop learning, networking and entertainment.

You'll get to:

- Explore the trends and innovations shaping our field.
- Share experiences with colleagues who've "been there, done that."
- Grow your learning portfolio and expand your skills by earning continuing education credits.
- Hear from and network with representatives from federal agencies.
- Take a break to rejuvenate and reconnect.

Don't miss the biggest event in behavioral health care in 2025 — join us and 5,000+ health care professionals in downtown Philadelphia from May 5-7!

## Interesting Reads

- [\*\*A checkup for the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 2: Still lots to do. NPR\*\*](#)
- [\*\*8 Things to know about the drug known as 'gas station heroin'. NPR\*\*](#)
- [\*\*More income could result in fewer trips to ER, study suggests. WBUR\*\*](#)
- [\*\*A California medical group treats only homeless patients--And makes money doing it. KFF Health News\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Immigrants have lower health care expenses than their U.S.-born counterpart. Kaiser Family Foundation.\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Nearly a third of adolescents getting mental health treatment, federal survey finds. CBS News.\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Medicaid enrollment drops by 383,000 from COVID high. Commonwealth Beacon\*\*](#)

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