

Coordinating medical and behavioral care for better health outcomes

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This article is intended for primary care physicians and behavioral health providers

Collaboration of care among primary care physicians and behavioral health providers is vital to comprehensive treatment for patients who have co-existing medical and behavioral health conditions.

We know that the benefits of working together mean:

- Higher patient satisfaction
- Lower readmission rates
- More coordinated continuity of care
- Fewer complications with treatment and prescribed medications

However, privacy laws intended to protect patients' personal health information can be a barrier to sharing information for effective care across disciplines.

How to coordinate care in compliance with these laws

- **Share patient information**

- Talk to your patient about how care collaboration can lead to better results.
- Explain to them that to get an overall picture of a patient's health, healthcare physicians and clinicians need to understand each patient's history, including diagnoses, treatment plans, and medications.

- **Use psychiatric collaborative care management CPT codes**

According to Dr. Ken Duckworth, Blue Cross Senior Medical Director of Behavioral Health, "Psychiatric Collaborative Care Management CPT codes allows your patients—our members—to be cared for through a team approach, involving a primary care physician, behavioral health care manager, and a psychiatric consultant."

For more information on care management coding, see our [Collaborative Care Management fact sheet](#).

- **Know about privacy laws**

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule has national standards to protect patients' personal health information. However, covered entities—including health plans, health care clearinghouses, and health care providers—can **use and disclose protected health information** for treatment, payment, and health care operations activities.

Resources

- [HIPAA Privacy Rule](#)
- [American Psychological Association "Collaboration Between Psychologists and Physicians Important to Improving Primary Health Care"](#)

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