



Every body + mind matters newsletter

Summer 2026



Aetna Better Health (ABHLA)

takes a whole-person approach to Medicaid, bringing together what matters most to health. Through expert care and easier access to services and support, we help our members live their healthiest lives. This newsletter is specifically dedicated for our providers with updates, resources, and articles. This newsletter, as well as previous newsletters, can be found [on our website](#).

Key Takeaways

- Provider Gold Card Program
- Help Prevent the Spread of STIs
- Digital Notice of Pregnancy is LIVE
- Sun Skin Safety

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Aetna Better Health of Louisiana offers sign language and over-the-phone interpreter services at no cost to the provider or member. Please contact Aetna Better Health of Louisiana at **1-855-242-0802** for more information on how to schedule these services in advance of an appointment.

The Bulletin Board

A quarterly roundup of Informational Bulletins and updates from LDH

- **Informational Bulletin 26-8: Implementation of the New 2026 HCPCS Codes** Remaining fee schedules will be updated via auto-refresh on 4/10/26. Claims will be automatically recycled.
- **Informational Bulletin 26-9: LDH Clarification Regarding Room and Board Recoupments** Room and board are not a Medicaid covered service. MCOs cannot use IB 25-31 as a justification for previously paid claims
- **UnitedHealthcare Update:** UHC is no longer a Louisiana Medicaid MCO. IBs 12-3, 12-16, 15-13, 15-14, 16-10, 21-9, 23-18, 24-21, 25-16, and 25-27 we updated to clarify and reflect this change.
- **LDH MCO Manual Update:** A number of sections of the LDH Medicaid MCO manual have been updated. These changes will be reflected in the next update to the ABHLA Provider Manual.

Back to School

TPN.health is a virtual platform where licensed providers can earn FREE continuing education. ABHLA sponsors CE/CMEs for a variety of provider types. For a full list of on demand and past webinars, scan the QR code.



Use QR code to access ALL ABHLA sponsored TPN.health events (live and ODE)

Provider Gold Card Program



Effective July 1, 2026, ABHLA launched the ABHLA Gold Card Program: a comprehensive, data driven initiative that rewards excellence while strengthening program integrity and member experience. Through reduced administrative barriers, improved access, and enhanced provider partnerships, this program transforms the way high value care is recognized and supported within Louisiana's Medicaid system.

Gold Card consideration is granted for designated high-volume, high-impact services where prior authorization auto-approval can be provided without increasing clinical or financial risk to members or providers. Providers are not required to apply for Gold Card status; instead, ABHLA will notify those who meet the eligibility criteria.

Gold Card Providers receive automatic prior authorization approval status for designated codes. Standard medical necessity rules still apply, but utilization is reviewed retrospectively only as needed. Designation last for 12 months, with annual monitoring and reassessment. For more information, please our [Provider Gold Card Program FAQs](#).

Talk : Test : Treat – Eliminating the Stigma Around STIs

Part 3: TREAT

The third phase of the CDC’s **Talk: Test: Treat** campaign focuses on **Treat**. Providers play a key role in reducing STI burden by ensuring timely treatment, reinforcing follow-up testing, and connecting patients to accessible care options.



Louisiana **STI Snapshot (2023)**:

In the U.S., Louisiana is ranked:

- **4th** highest diagnosis rate for **HIV**
- **2nd** highest diagnosis rate for **gonorrhea**
- **1st** highest diagnosis rate **chlamydia**
- **7th** highest diagnosis rate **congenital syphilis**

HIV & Syphilis Trends in Louisiana, according to the [LDH’s quarterly report](#) as of **September 30, 2025**:

HIV

- **72.3%** of new HIV cases occurred in men
- **24.2%** of new HIV cases occurred in women
- **59.4%** of new cases were among individuals ages **13–34**

Syphilis

- **63.9%** of new cases occurred in men
- **34.6%** of new cases occurred in women
- **63.3%** of new cases were among individuals ages **13–34**
- **A total of 64 mothers and 65 infants have been linked to congenital syphilis cases.**

Treat STIs According to Current Guidelines

Treat patients for STIs as recommended. The [2021 STI Treatment Guidelines](#) are the most current recommendations for treating patients who have, or are at risk for, STI infection. [LA factsheet from LDH](#) contains testing and treatment guidelines.

Expanded Options for STI Treatment & Care

As recommended by the [CDC](#), Providers can help patients access care through **non-traditional and flexible options**:

- Express visits allow walk-in STI testing and treatment without a full clinical exam.
- Pharmacies and retail health clinics can expand access to STI testing and treatment.
- Telehealth/telemedicine can improve access to STI testing and treatment, especially in rural areas, and support self-testing
- At-home specimen collection allows patients to self-collect samples for lab testing; an FDA-approved HIV self-test is also available when in-person care is not feasible.

Important Reminders for Providers

- Screening recommendations are **clinical guidance**, not prescriptive standards
- Always consider a patient’s **sexual history** and the **burden of disease** in their community
- **Reinfection is common** for some STIs. Encourage follow-up testing **three months after treatment**

If a patient is not ready to test today, they can access resources through the [Louisiana Health Hub](#) to explore testing and treatment options on their own. For care management, submit a [Care Management Referral form](#).

SPF: Screening, Prevention, and Facing Racial Biases

The sun shines a little brighter in Louisiana. And all that UV can do real damage to your patients' skin. Non-melanoma skin cancer is one of the most common cancers in the US, but a lack of research and training (coupled with persistent melanin myths) often means that early warning signs go undetected in people with non-white skin. Stay cool by helping all of your patients protect their biggest organ.

Sun and Screening



Encourage routine skin screening



Stress the importance of prevention



Familiarize yourself with how UV damage appears across all skin types

A Fitter Future: Combating Childhood Obesity



Childhood obesity is a significant public health concern in Louisiana, with 20.9% of children ages 6–17 living with obesity. [This provider network notification](#) outlines how Aetna Better Health of Louisiana supports prevention and treatment through proper screening, documentation, and counseling. It emphasizes **BMI percentile documentation, counseling for nutrition and physical activity, and use of specific obesity diagnosis codes** to improve clinical accuracy, quality reporting, and individualized care. The document also highlights evidence-based resources and community programs for providers and families, including adaptive physical activity options for children with disabilities, to promote healthier outcomes statewide.

Digital Notice of Pregnancy

Late pregnancy identification is the single largest root cause of maternal health risk at ABHLA. Early identification drives better outcomes across prenatal timeliness, low birth weight (LBW), postpartum visits, and the ability to deploy care management, VABs, RPM, and doula support. The sooner the plan knows, the sooner we can support the member and baby. In addition to fax submissions, Notice of Pregnancy forms can now be submitted digitally directly to our Care Management team using the QR code.



Scan or click the QR code to access the Digital NOP form.



Why 7-Day Follow-Up Matters After Behavioral Health & Substance Use Care Transitions

The period immediately following hospitalization or an emergency department (ED) visit for mental health or substance use conditions is a **high-risk transition window**. Timely **7-day follow-up** is a **safety strategy** that helps:

- Prevent relapse, decompensation, and crisis recurrence
- Reduce avoidable ED visits and hospital readmissions
- Improve engagement in ongoing treatment
- Strengthening care coordination and continuity
- Improve safety outcomes, including reduced suicide and overdose risk

Ensuring timely follow-up protects patients during their most vulnerable period and improves outcomes for high-risk Medicaid populations.

What Providers Can Do

- Schedule follow-up appointments **before discharge or ED release**
- Prioritize appointments for recently discharged patients
- Use **telehealth or phone visits** when in-person access is a barrier
- Reinforce medication plans and assess adherence
- Address barriers such as transportation, housing, or pharmacy access
- Coordinate with primary care, behavioral health, and SUD providers
- Quickly reschedule missed appointments—**ideally within 24 hours**

For full details on how 7-day follow-ups affect quality measures and health outcomes, review our [Why 7-Day Follow-Up Matters](#) provider notification.