



Memorandum

To: Behavioral health providers

From: Sejal Hathi, MD, MBA, Oregon Health Authority Director
Ebony Clarke, MSW, Behavioral Health Director
Emma Sandoe, PhD, MPH, Medicaid Director

Date: Feb. 20, 2026

Subject: Rulemaking for Board-Registered Behavioral Health Associates

This memo is to inform you that Oregon Health Authority (OHA) will begin the rulemaking process in spring of 2026 to require board-registered behavioral health associates, registered per their respective licensing boards, to work in an organization with a Certificate of Approval (COA) from OHA to bill Medicaid for behavioral health treatment. OHA plans to finalize rules by July 1, 2026, and implement on Oct. 1, 2026.

This means that as of Oct. 1, 2026, board-registered behavioral health associates must work for a COA-holding agency to bill Medicaid. Director Hathi heard from coordinated care organizations (CCOs) and community mental health program (CMHP) leaders during her 2024 regional listening tour about the challenges related to the [2016 policy](#) allowing board-registered associates to practice independently.

- The policy change of 2016, combined with the increased Medicaid behavioral health rates in 2023, created a workforce shift from CMHPs into private practice, which left our most critical safety net providers struggling to hire and retain staff.
- CCOs reported quality of care concerns with independently practicing associates including lack of safety assessment and planning, and treatment in excess of medical necessity.

Increasing development and support of an independent provider model is in contrast to the OHA policy direction of moving toward team-based care for Medicaid members

with complex and acute needs. With this change OHA will ensure that providers serving Medicaid members are trained and supported to treat any clinical presentation and complexity within the population served.

Various feedback and engagement shaped policymaking, which informed the decision that a COA is not required for billing Medicaid when board-registered behavioral health associates work in the following settings:

- Clinics under Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), a federal regulatory agency; such clinics include Federally Qualified Health Centers, Rural Health Clinics, and Tribal Behavioral Health Clinics.
- School settings, including State-Certified School-Based Health Centers and School-Based Health Services.

A detailed analysis of the Oregon Health Plan member and provider survey results will be released in March 2026. The Rules Advisory Committee (RAC) and public comment period will occur in spring 2026; further community engagement will shape policy decisions.

If you have questions or feedback about this proposed rule, please email OHA.DirectorsOffice@odhsoha.oregon.gov. If you are a provider interested in obtaining a COA, please send a request to LCApplications@oha.oregon.gov.