

ENGAGING LARGE EMPLOYERS REGARDING **Evidence-Based Behavioral Health Treatment**

An Employer's Implementation Toolkit for Comprehensive Behavioral Health Services

PART II: INTRODUCTION

- Overview
- Creation of Behavioral Health Recommendations
- Toolkit Highlights
- Employer Benefit Lifecycle
- Toolkit Organization
- Table of Tools
- How to Use the Toolkit

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Overview

Over the past several years, employers have attempted to improve behavioral health care service delivery systems. Despite important progress, behavioral health care benefits and related program administration efforts have not been effectively integrated with other employer group health benefits, including general medical insurance, pharmacy coverage, condition management and disability insurance. As a result, the structure and administration of employer-sponsored medical and behavioral health benefits remain fragmented, uncoordinated, duplicative and uneven in quality and access.

Creation of Behavioral Health Recommendations - Guide

In response to the need to provide guidance to its members, the National Business Group on Health (Business Group) produced “An Employer’s Guide to Behavioral Health Services” (*Guide*) (http://www.businessgrouphealth.org/pdfs/fullreport_behavioralhealthservices.pdf). The *Guide* highlighted recommendations aimed at improving an employer’s coordination, access, quality and integration of behavioral health services.

Adaptation of the *Guide* into an Implementation Toolkit

Recognizing the value of the recommendations contained in the *Guide*, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) approached the Business Group to create an employer-focused implementation toolkit that would ultimately improve the health status of individuals with behavioral health conditions.

With funding from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the National Business Group on Health formed the National Leadership Committee on Behavioral Health (NLCBH) to develop “An Employer’s Implementation Toolkit for Comprehensive Behavioral Health Services” (*Toolkit*).

NLCBH reviewed the *Guide*’s recommendations, structured them into actionable employer “practice recommendations”, and compiled them into the Toolkit that employers can use to design, administer, and evaluate their health plans. The practice recommendations selected for this *Toolkit* represent a set of priorities the NLCBH identified as particularly troublesome for employers, health plans, and providers.

It is also important to acknowledge that the *Toolkit*’s practice recommendations do not focus so much on the performance of managed behavioral healthcare organizations (MBHOs), but on coordination between behavioral health vendors and the broader manager care organizations, pharmacy benefit managers, and disability and EAP vendors. This decision to focus on the broader plans is due, in part, to the increase in behavioral health treatment provided by general medical practitioners and primary care physicians. In addition, as the primary mode of treating behavioral health conditions has been the use of psychotropic medications, employers are requesting guidance on how to provide plan administration oversight to their general medical and pharmacy plan benefits. A key component of these practice recommendations is the use of collaborative care, which is an evidence-based practice that has been well researched.

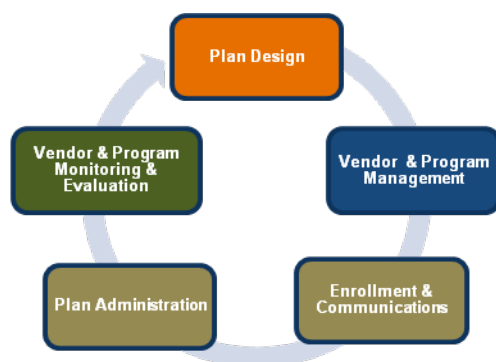
Toolkit Highlights

This *Toolkit* provides technical guidance to help employers efficiently and effectively design, implement and monitor the performance of the *Guide*’s behavioral health practice recommendations. In order to achieve this objective, the *Toolkit* is organized as follows:

- The *Guide*'s recommendations were structured into actionable employer Practice Recommendations, which are a set of current improvement priorities for employer-sponsored behavioral health benefits.
- The Practice Recommendations were further broken down into actionable tools that support the employer's work activities within the benefit lifecycle and across multiple types of benefit plan administrators and/or vendors.
- Each practice recommendation is formatted to address multiple vendors in order to help employers assess and verify the presence or absence of each recommendation in their internal operations as well as their plan administrator/vendor's operations.

Employer Benefit Lifecycle

In order to support an employer's implementation of the *Toolkit*, the practice recommendations were adapted into a typical employer's benefit lifecycle. The compilation of the various tools that support this lifecycle constitutes the *Toolkit*, and may be divided into the following general steps:



Tools Specific to Supporting an Employer's Toolkit Utilization Include:

- **Tool One – Quick Reference:** Overview of the Practice Recommendations with a quick assessment tool to determine the status of implementation.
- **Appendix:** The rationale and scientific evidence for each Practice Recommendation.

Tools Specific to Plan Design within the Toolkit Include:

- **Tool Two – Employer Assessment:** An assessment of the extent to which the employer has adopted the Practice Recommendations.
- **Tool Three – Benefit Design:** Technical guidance on addressing the plan design deficiencies identified in the Employer Assessment Tool.

Tools Specific to Vendor and Program Management within the Toolkit Include:

- **Tool Four – RFP and Proposal Scoring Tool:** Vendor solicitation language describing the administrative requirements associated with the Practice Recommendations. This tool also includes proposed evaluation criteria for vendor proposals.

- **Tool Five - Vendor Contracting and Administration:** Contract guidelines and/or administrative guidance associated with the plan administration aspects of the Practice Recommendations.

Tool Specific to Vendor and Program Evaluation and Monitoring within the Toolkit Include:

- **Tool Six - Vendor and Program Evaluation:** Enables the employer to assess the extent to which the vendor has implemented the practice recommendations.

Toolkit Organization

Each tool has been color-coded to its corresponding step within the employer benefits lifecycle to make it easier to track the implementation of a specific Practice Recommendation throughout the benefits lifecycle.

- Tools Supporting the **Employer’s Utilization** of the *Toolkit* are in **RED**
- Tools Associated with **Plan Design** are **ORANGE**
- Tools Associated with **Vendor and Program Management** are **BLUE**
- Tools Associated with **Vendor and Program Evaluation and Management** are **Green**

Note: The *Toolkit* does not address implementation details associated with enrollment, communications and plan administration.

Practice Recommendation Specifics for Each Plan Administrator/Vendor Type

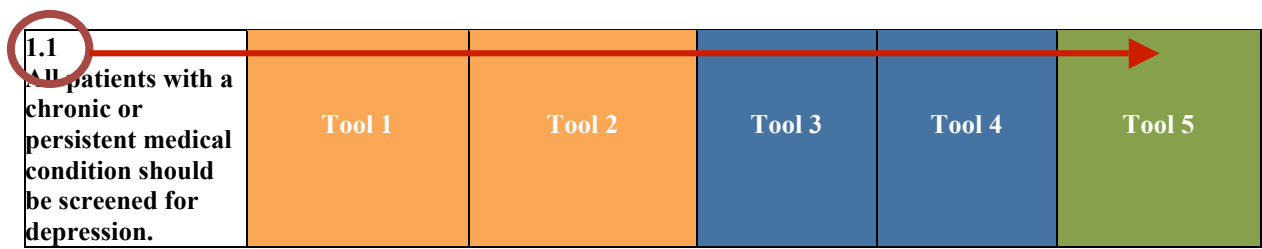
In each tool section, the following types of plan administrators/vendors organize the Practice Recommendations:

- 1.0 General Medical
- 2.0 Behavioral Health
- 3.0 Pharmacy Benefit Manager
- 4.0 Condition (i.e., disease and case) Management
- 5.0 Disability Plan Administrator
- 6.0 Employee Assistance Program

Linking Content Across the Benefit Lifecycle-based Tools: Practice Recommendations by Plan Administrator/Vendor Type

The numbers associated with each plan administrator/vendor type allow a *Toolkit* user to research quickly the Practice Recommendation application across the benefit lifecycle (Tools 1 – 5).

Practice Recommendation	Plan Design		Vendor & Program Management		Vendor & Program Evaluation
Plan Administrator/ Vendor Type General Medical	Tool 2 Assessment	Employer Tool	Tool 3 Design Tool	Benefit	Tool 6 Vendor & Program Evaluation Tool
			Tool 4 RFP Language & Proposal Scoring Tool	Tool 5 Vendor & Program Contracting Tool	



Tool Alignment and Linkage

The content of each tool is aligned with the activities associated with that particular step within the benefit lifecycle.

Tool-Specific Quick Assessments

At the conclusion of each tool section, a quick assessment is provided to help employers assess the extent to which they have implemented the Practice Recommendations. Specific questions about the Practice Recommendation help employers assess and verify the presence or absence of each recommendation in their operations as well as their vendor’s operations. Upon completion of the evaluation process, employers and vendors should have a better understanding of how their plan design and administrative performance compare to the referenced best practices.

Toolkit Scientific Basis

The administrative guidance contained in the tools is based on published research, including [The Surgeon General’s Report on Mental Health](#); the President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health report, [Improving the Quality of Healthcare for Mental and Substance Abuse Conditions](#), published by the Institute of Medicine; NBGH member survey findings; and recommendations generated by an expert advisory board.

Table of Tools within the Toolkit

Table of Tools		
Benefit Lifecycle	Lifecycle Based Tool	Tool Description
Reference	Tool One: Quick Reference	Overview of the Practice Recommendations with a quick assessment tool to determine the status of implementation.
Plan Design	Tool Two: Employer Assessment	An assessment of the extent to which the employer has adopted the Practice Recommendations in <i>An Employer’s Guide to Behavioral Health Services</i> .
	Tool Three: Benefit Design	Technical guidance that employers can use to design benefits that support applicable Practice Recommendations.
Vendor & Program Management	Tool Four: Request-for-Proposal & Proposal Scoring	Suggested solicitation language and evaluation guidelines that describe the administrative requirements associated with the Practice Recommendations.
	Tool Five: Vendor Contracting & Program Administration	Suggested vendor contracting and program administration guidance associated with applicable Practice Recommendations.
Vendor & Program Evaluation	Tool Six: Vendor & Program Evaluation	Technical guidance that can be used to assess the extent to which vendors or programs have implemented the Practice Recommendations.

Appendix	Practice Recommendation Reference	An overview of each Practice Recommendation, its objectives, and a rationale summarizing available research and expert opinion.
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How to Use the Toolkit

Recognizing the time and resource constraints within corporate benefits departments, the *Toolkit* was designed to assist employers in efficiently implementing the Practice Recommendations. The following is a suggested method of using the *Toolkit*:

- Step One** Complete the Employer Quick Reference Tool to identify specific practice recommendations that have not been implemented by the employer or adopted by its associated plan administrator.
- Step Two** For “Don’t Know” or “No” responses to the Quick Reference Tool, refer to the numbered content in Tool One for further assessment information.
- Step Three** Determine the specific “Don’t Know” or “No” responses to be addressed within the next stage of the company’s benefit design lifecycle.

After the completion of Step Three, employers can assess and/or adopt specific recommendations from the tool sections that correspond to a specific stage of the employer’s benefit lifecycle.