

## **Behavioral health care and the Medicare program**

**ISSUE:** Behavioral health disorders have a significant impact on individuals' health care expenditures and on government spending. Behavioral health conditions among the Medicare population are more prevalent for certain categories of beneficiaries (e.g., beneficiaries entitled based on Disability Insurance), and beneficiaries with behavioral health conditions have higher utilization of Medicare services and higher per-beneficiary spending than average.

**KEY POINTS:** This paper presents an overview of behavioral health conditions among the Medicare population, describes structural and cultural factors that shaped current behavioral health treatment, and describes Medicare coverage provisions that govern diagnosis and treatment for behavioral health.

**ACTION:** Commissioners should review the material and be prepared to discuss potential directions for this work.

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