

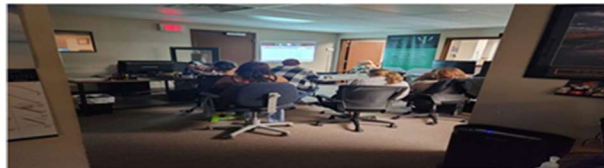


Volume 104/ February 2026

Associated Billing Center's Newsletter

Exclusively Serving Mental Health Practices

Building Our Reputation One Client at a Time Web: mentalhealthbillers.com



AMERICAN MEDICAL
BILLING ASSOCIATION



A Message from Mona:

Finding Calm in the Chaos

With the current chaos in the Middle East and the uncertainty felt around the globe, Associated Billing Center aims to be a point of calm in your professional life. Our mission is to provide you with peace of mind in at least one vital area: the management of your mental health practice.

You often hear me messaging about the importance of effective communication between your practice and our office. There is a reason for that. In this increasingly "AI and robotic" world we are immersed in, we know what clients are truly looking for.

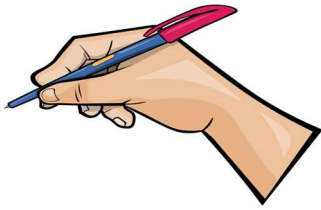
The common denominator is confidence. Our clients want to know that their inquiries will be heard, addressed promptly, and—most importantly—resolved by a real person who cares. We are committed to being the reliable human connection for you. Rest assured.

MONA



Associated Billing Center's Education Box-Staying Informed

- Telehealth & The "In-Person" Rule: While many flexibilities have been extended, there is ongoing discussion regarding the "occasional in-person visit" requirement for Medicare behavioral health. We will post any immediate changes to this rule.
- Reminder: Continue to document the Place of Service (POS) whether an in office visit or telehealth, and appropriate modifiers. Accurate location data is the best way to prevent "robotic" claim denials.
- Important: Ensure your progress notes reflect your unique clinical insight. Avoid "cloned" notes; payers are increasingly flagging repetitive, automated-looking text.
- Patient Billing Question: If your patient has a question concerning billing, please refer them to us instead of navigating complex financial questions yourself.
- Verification is First: Always verify insurance benefits before the first session (if possible) to prevent "surprises" for you and the patient. *Our Patient Information Profile Page* drives smooth, uninterrupted claims processing.
- Credentialing: We work closely with Kellie Goodroe/CEO, Affordable Physician Services. Kgoodroe@affordablephysicianservices.com. Inform Kellie that you are a client of Associated Billing Center.
- Associated Billing Center utilizes the services of Liles/Parker, an attorney health care firm representing mental health providers nationwide seeking council in practice matters. Web: lilesparker.com Speak with Robert Liles.



You're Welcoming a New Patient to the Practice

Associated *Billing Center* Suggestions:

Establishing clear rules and guidelines for new patients is important for maintaining a positive and productive relationship.

Confidentiality: Clearly explain the limits and explanations regarding confidentiality. Assure the patient that their personal information will be kept confidential within legal and ethical boundaries.

Appointment Policies: Outline your policies regarding scheduling, cancellations and no-shows. Specify how much notice is required for cancellations and whether there are any fees associated with missed appointments. How important is a sound cancellation policy? Let's review this example: If you see 20 clients a week at \$150 per session with two no-shows per week, that translates to \$1,200 per month (of course insurance contracted fees will alter these numbers).

Payment & Billing: Clearly communicate your fees, payment methods accepted and billing policies. Inform your patients that any questions concerning billing can be made directly to *Associated Billing Center*.

Communication: Clarify your preferred methods of communication such as through phone calls, emails or a secure online portal. Set expectations for response times.

Telehealth Instructions for connecting if applicable.

HIPAA: Understanding when information is confidential and when it may be shared.



TELEHEALTH UPDATE As of early 2026, the landscape for telemental health has shifted from "temporary emergency measures" to a more stable, though still transitional, regulatory framework.

State and federal negotiations over permanent policy are ongoing, with proposals (like the CONNECT for Health Act) aiming to make permanent many pandemic-era mental telehealth access flexibilities and repeal burdensome in-person visit requirements.

Psychiatrists Take Note: No In-Person Requirement (For Now): Through December 31, 2026, DEA-registered practitioners can continue to prescribe Schedule II-V controlled substances (like Adderall, Xanax or Buprenorphine) via telehealth without a prior in-person evaluation.

Medicare & Reimbursement (CMS Rules)

Following the signing of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026 in February, several key flexibilities were extended through December 31, 2027: **Originating Site:** Patients can continue to receive telehealth services from their home. The pre-pandemic requirement that a patient be in a rural clinical facility has been waived. **In-Person "Wait" Waived:** The statutory requirement for an in-person visit within six months of starting telemental health (and every 12 months after) is delayed until 2028. You do not need to see your Medicare provider in person to maintain telehealth eligibility in 2026. **Audio-Only Care:** Mental health services delivered via telephone (audio-only) remain permanently covered for patients in their homes, provided the clinician has video capability but the patient cannot or chooses not to use it.

HIPAA Compliance: The "discretionary" period for using non-public apps (like FaceTime or Skype) has ended. All 2026 telehealth must be conducted on HIPAA-compliant platforms with a signed Business Associate Agreement (BAA).

While federal rules have relaxed, state laws remain the primary hurdle for 2026.



*Note: The following content is not applicable to mental health directory advertising. It relates to social media marketing and local print advertising.

Advertising for mental health is unique. Unlike a plumber or a florist, people aren't just looking for a service; they are looking for a safe space and a human connection. If your practice isn't full through word-of-mouth alone, advertising is the most effective way to reach the people who need your specific expertise.

Why Advertising Matters for Your Practice Visibility for Niche

Expertise: If you specialize in something specific (like EMDR, postpartum anxiety, or LGBTQ+ issues), ads help you bypass the "generalist" noise and find your ideal clients.

Filling the Gaps: If you have specific time slots open or are launching a new group therapy session, targeted ads can fill those seats much faster than organic SEO.

Building Brand Familiarity: Even if a client doesn't click the first time, seeing your name makes you a "known entity" when they finally feel ready to reach out.

Important Ethical & Professional Guardrails Because you're in a regulated field, your ads need to be handled with care:

Avoid "Guaranteed Results": Mental health is subjective. Phrases like "We will cure your depression" are unethical and often illegal. Focus on "Support for..." or "Helping you navigate..."

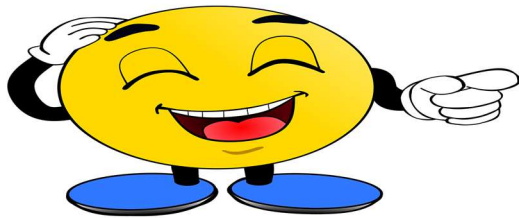
Privacy is Paramount: Never use client testimonials in ads unless you are 100% sure you are meeting your local board's ethical guidelines (many boards strictly forbid this).

The "Vibe" Check: Your ad should reflect the feeling of your office. Use calming colors, professional yet warm photography and clear, jargon-free language



AI UPDATE IN FLORIDA

Legislation is advancing in Florida that would strictly regulate and in many cases, ban the use of artificial intelligence in mental health therapy. Proposed as part of a 2026 "AI Bill of Rights" and specific bills (such as HB 281 and SB 344), these measures aim to prohibit AI from acting as a licensed therapist or counselor. Associated *Billing Center* will watch this story closely for updates.



Laugh a Little or Maybe a Lot. It's Good Therapy.

>The "Lightbulb" Moment" (We know this could be considered an antiquity- but we still consider it a classic).

Q: How many therapists does it take to change a lightbulb?

A: Only one, but the lightbulb has to really want to change.

> I tried to join a support group for people who struggle with procrastination. They haven't met yet.

>I achieved work-life balance. Work is stressful, life is stressful — perfectly balanced.

>I tried positive self-talk. Now the voice in my head has a motivational podcast.

>Therapy: The only place where oversharing is a skill.

>My therapist told me the way to achieve inner peace is to finish what I start. So far today, I've finished two bags of chips and a chocolate cake. I feel better already.

STORIES YOU SIMPLY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT



In 2026, tariffs have moved from a "political headline" to a line item on wedding contracts. Because the wedding industry relies heavily on global supply chains—from silk in China to roses in Colombia—new trade policies have caused a noticeable "price creep" in nearly every category. Industry experts suggest padding your total budget by 10% to 25% to account for these fluctuations. **Wedding Dresses:** Roughly 90% sold in the U.S. are manufactured overseas (primarily in China and Southeast Asia). Even "Made in USA" gowns often use imported lace, silk, and beading. These raw materials are now subject to higher import duties. **Cut Flowers:** About 80% of cut flowers in the U.S. come from South America (Colombia and Ecuador) and Europe. **Imported Spirits:** (Tequila from Mexico, Whisky from Canada) and French Champagne have been hit by specific duties. Expect to see higher "per bottle" costs or a shift toward domestic sparkling wines. **Table Linens:** Most event linens are sourced from Asia. Rental companies are facing higher replacement costs for their inventory, leading to higher rental fees for tablecloths, napkins and drapes.



The Litter-Bug Dog: In Catania, Italy, authorities used surveillance to bust a man who had trained his dog to carry garbage bags and dump them on the side of the road to help the owner avoid littering fines.



Exclusively Serving Mental Health Professionals Since 2001

Thanks for being part of our **A**ssociated **B**illing **C**enter, LLC family. We Never take your business for granted. Never.

Please check out our website: mentalhealthbillers.com for our News & Blog updates.

Take Note: Associated Billing Center scrubs every claim prior to submission for accuracy. Our pass-through rate is 98.1 percent.



Associated **B**illing **C**enter, LLC values client feedback. Please call us immediately if you have a question concerning your account. Your feedback helps to ensure that we are offering optimum service to our clients.

More About Associated Billing Center, LLC

Associated **B**illing **C**enter, LLC was established in 2001 to exclusively provide Mental Health billing services to individual and group practices. We are certified as a third-party biller by our State Department of Banking & Insurance. We work as your dedicated back office with the focus on improving your RCM (Revenue Cycle Management) while allowing you to do what you do best – take care of your patients.



A personal testimonial is invaluable when evaluating a billing service's credentials and its commitment to its clients.

☆☆☆☆☆ | The Gold Standard for Mental Health Billing

>Partnering with Associated Billing Center has been the single most impactful decision I've made for the health of my practice. As a clinician, my heart is in the therapy room, not in the grueling cycle of claim denials, CPT code updates, and insurance follow-ups. Mona, thanks to you and your team for your commitment to the success of our practice.

Sydney B. Ph.D. Group Practice CFO

>Hi Mona, you have No Idea how much I have and do appreciate all you and ABC have done for me from the very beginning = and that you continue to do for me. When I read that "you have me covered; don't worry"! I got tears in my eyes! You guys go so far "above and beyond"! I think ABC can also stand for the "Above and Beyond Company"!!!

Thanks! Thanks, and Thanks! Bethann A. LCSW

>MONA YOU WERE RIGHT. WHEN I CALLED YOUR COMPANY A LIVE PERSON NOT A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT ANSWERS THE CALL. THAT WAS THE FIRST STEP IN REDUCING MY STRESS FROM MY PREVIOUS BILLING COMPANY, WHICH I FOUND MANY TIMES TO BE DIFFICULT TO CONNECT WITH. THANKS FOR FOLLOWING THROUGH ON ALL THAT YOU PROMISED. HOW REFRESHING. MY STRESS LEVEL IS DOWN! MY REVENUE IS UP!

Maryanne W. LCSW

>It is truly amazing. When you were pitching your services to me and trying to convince me to sign up you described the services of Associated Billing Center. Here is the amazing part. Your company followed through on all the commitments you made to me in our preliminary discussion. It is absolutely refreshing to find a mental health billing service that follows through on its advertised promises to potential clients.

Family

Counseling Center

>Mona, Thank you, Happy New Year to all of you! I'm so happy to continue to work with you. You are SO appreciated much more than you know.

Natalie, LCSW

> Mona, I received a call from one of your providers telling me how great you guys are and how quickly you work to get any issues resolved. I am thrilled that she provided me with your information. My group practice is running more smoothly and with less administrative difficulties than we recently experienced. And it's true! Whenever I call your company, I always get a live person answering the phone not a voice message. Mona, a great big thanks to you and your staff for doing such an efficient job.

Ellen & Jim S. Ph.D. Group Practice

More Actual Client Testimonials

>I must have gone through four billing services before I found Associated Billing Center. It was worth the wait. My practice revenue has grown; my stress level is reduced, and I have been able to grow my practice because of less time on administrative work.

Ellen W. Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner