

PROVIDER CONNECTIONS

PARTNERING WITH PROVIDERS TO EMPOWER MEMBERS TO LEAD FULLER, HEALTHIER LIVES

FALL 2024



Empower Healthcare Solutions concludes Quality Incentive Program initiative

Empower Healthcare Solutions is announcing the conclusion of the Quality Incentive Program (QIP). The most recent payments for incentives met through the fourth quarter of 2023 mark the final distribution under this program.

The QIP was a targeted initiative for medical/surgical hospitals, designed to

incentivize and reward quality improvement in specific areas. This program aimed to enhance patient outcomes by providing financial incentives to providers who adhered to best practices and standards of care. Empower and its providers collaborated extensively to elevate the quality of care delivered to PASSE members through this program.

Key performance measures of the QIP included:

- Post-discharge follow-up visits
- Prior authorizations
- Readmissions
- Patient satisfaction
- Hospital-acquired conditions

The program was specific to medical/surgical admissions and did not include stand-alone psychiatric hospitals. Throughout its duration, providers received quarterly data updates, and Empower shared individual results to

support performance improvement

Empower is pleased to announce that the QIP will be succeeded by an internal Transition of Care (TOC) program. This new initiative, led by our Clinical Case Management team, will continue focusing on improving post-discharge follow-up visits, reducing readmissions, enhancing patient satisfaction, and mitigating hospital-acquired conditions. (See page 4 for more information)

Empower's dedication to collaborating with providers to improve the quality of care for PASSE members remains unwavering.

The Empower team thanks all participants of the QIP for their contributions and commitment to delivering high-quality care to our members.

For more details about the TOC program and other quality initiatives, please visit the Empower website, getempowerhealth.com.

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Overcoming homelessness and chronic conditions: an Empower member's journey

Earlier this year, an Empower Healthcare Solutions member faced significant challenges, including homelessness and living far from family. Now, thanks to an Empower quality program, the member's future is looking brighter.

During the member's recent critical juncture, the member decided to join the Empower Chronic Conditions Management Program. The previous year had been marked by multiple emergency department visits and inpatient hospitalizations due to exacerbations of chronic conditions

With the dedicated support of the member's Care Coordinator and Chronic Conditions Management Nurse, the member made the courageous decision to reconnect with their estranged family. Their family welcomed them back, providing a stable living environment. Since moving in with family, the member has maintained consistent housing, access to food, and reliable transportation to medical appointments.

The member has attended all primary care and specialist appointments as scheduled and

"This Empower member story is a testament to the profound impact of addressing social determinants of health and the comprehensive support provided by Empower's Chronic Conditions Management Program."

Melissa Griffin, RN, BSN,
Empower Quality Nurse Specialist

adheres to an medication regimen daily. Remarkably, no acute medical concerns have arisen since the member began working closely with their Care Coordinator and Chronic Conditions Management Nurse.

The Empower member now enjoys participating in family events and relishes this newfound stability and joy.

"This Empower member story is a testament to the profound impact of addressing social determinants of health and the comprehensive support provided by Empower's Chronic Conditions Management Program,"

shared Melissa Griffin, RN, BSN, Empower Quality Nurse Specialist.

The Chronic Management team encourages providers to refer Empower members with complex care needs to the program. Please send referrals, encompassing Diabetes, Hypertension, COPD, Asthma, Congestive Heart Failure and other cardiovascular conditions, to chronic.conditions@empowerarkansas.com. In follow up of the referral, Griffin, will confirm receipt of the referral and contact the member to initiate program services.

The chronic condition management program can help members get more out of life. As part of Empower benefits, Empower staff is here to help members learn more about their health, keeping them and their needs in mind at every step.

The Chronic Condition team includes care coordinators and a registered nurse, Griffin, specializing in Chronic Care Management. They'll help members learn how to better manage conditions, or health issues.

For more information, visit getempowerhealth.com.

August is National Immunization Awareness month

■ Best practices to ensure providers never miss opportunity to vaccinate

August is National Immunization Awareness Month which is an awareness campaign that aims to highlight the importance of immunizations across the different stages of life.

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) has published fact sheets to provide information about vaccine testing, safety, monitoring and the process for establishing the U.S. Immunization schedule. These materials are intended to help health care professionals keep up to date on vaccine topics. The sheets may also be distributed to parents wanting in-depth information on these topics after talking to their child's doctor.

Most sheets include references and published scientific studies. According to *Provider Resources for Vaccine Conversations with Parents* published by the CDC, patients and parents can feel more confident about vaccinating when everyone in the practice shares the same message. From the front desk to the exam room to checkout, everyone plays an important role in supporting vaccination.



Ongoing communication is essential in making sure patients stay on schedule with vaccinations.

Adopt these best practices (below) to ensure you never miss an opportunity to vaccinate.

1. Make patients and parents aware of your immunization policy. When you ensure every patient and parent that visits your practice is aware of your immunization policy, you lay the foundation for effective vaccination recommendations.
2. Make vaccine resources easy to find. Making immunization information readily available saves time by helping patients and parents get their questions answered before they meet with you.
3. Review each patient's vaccination status and prepare them to receive vaccines. By assessing vaccination status at every visit, you can avoid missed opportunities to vaccinate and reinforce that vaccinations are important.
4. Make effective recommendations. Research has shown an effective recommendation from a healthcare professional is the main reason parents decide to vaccinate.
5. Answer questions and address concerns. Patients and parents are likely to have questions, even if they already plan to vaccinate. By welcoming and answering questions, you help patients and parents feel supported.
6. Implement procedures and policies that help staff support vaccination. Effective administrative procedures, clear policies, and useful training programs equip your staff to support vaccination and work efficiently.
7. Schedule upcoming vaccinations before the patient leaves the office. Checkout is a key opportunity to reinforce the importance of vaccination and plan for upcoming vaccines.
8. Remind patients and parents about upcoming vaccination appointments and missed appointments.

Empower Healthcare Solutions Transition of Care program enhances member support, outcomes

Last quarter, the Quality Department of Empower Healthcare Solutions launched the Medical Transitions of Care (TOC) Program. In the past three months, this pilot program helped 39 members located in central Arkansas move smoothly from hospital care to lower levels of care, such as acute rehab and home health services.

Empower's TOC approach focuses on personalized care and strong member relationships. A Quality Team nurse meets with members in the hospital before discharge to create individualized care plans based on their goals. The nurse also collaborates with the inpatient care team, including discharge planners and physicians, to ensure a smooth transition.

Following are a few success stories from the TOC program:

■ Managing complex conditions:

Empower TOC team helped a member with a complex medical condition who was frequently hospitalized due to infections. This member needed more supplies than Medicaid would cover. The TOC nurse worked with the provider to secure reimbursement for the necessary supplies, reducing the chances of readmission.

■ Improving Diabetes Management:

Another member with uncontrolled diabetes was often hospitalized due to high blood sugar levels. This member struggled with frequent blood glucose checks. The TOC nurse provided at-home education on using a continuous glucose monitor, helping the member manage blood sugar levels more accurately and adjust insulin doses effectively.



“These examples show the positive impact of our TOC program on member health and well-being,” shared Cynthia Ball, RN, Quality Nurse Senior Analyst. “By providing personalized support and resources, we help members achieve better health outcomes and reduce hospital readmissions.”

Changes to Empower Outpatient Behavioral Health Modifiers

Empower Healthcare Solutions has updated the following Outpatient Behavioral Health codes and their corresponding modifiers. Reference the Outpatient Behavioral Health Limits document for complete details, found at getempowerhealth.com. Please note that this change is only related to Z modifiers being removed.

Code changes:

- 99212 – Pharmacological Management**
- 99213 – Pharmacological Management**
- 99214 – Pharmacological Management**
- H2011 – Crisis Intervention**
- H2017 – Life Skills Development (Individual and Group)**



These changes will be effective Sept. 1, 2024. There will be no impact to current authorizations or billing.

For questions, please contact Empower Provider Relations at empowerhealthcaresolutionspr@empowerarkansas.com.

Empower completes HEDIS MY2023 review

Empower Healthcare Solutions is pleased to announce the completion of the HEDIS MY2023 season. HEDIS (Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set) is a critical tool used by over 90 percent of America's health plans to measure performance across key dimensions of care and service.

This year's HEDIS review revealed several notable achievements. Data aggregation efforts led to an impressive increase in medical record retrieval, rising from 95.62 percent in MY2022 to 96.95 percent in MY2023. This improvement was a result of enhanced chase logic and effective communication strategies. Additionally, Empower's collaboration with the State Health Alliance for Records Exchange (SHARE) played a significant role in incorporating supplementary A1c lab data for HEDIS. This rigorous primary source verification process placed Empower ahead of other PASSEs in terms of data accuracy and quality reporting.

The CAHPS (Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems) survey provided valuable insights into member satisfaction. Key ratings, based on the percentage of respondents rating eight or higher out of 10, included: personal doctor satisfaction at 86.12 percent for adults and 87.87 percent for children with chronic conditions, and health plan satisfaction at 82.41 percent for adults and 85.19 percent for children with chronic conditions. These results highlight our strong performance in member engagement and satisfaction.

The HEDIS auditor validated Empower's data management and reporting processes, commending us for the effective use of supplemental data sources and our

collaboration with data aggregation vendors. This feedback underscores our commitment to data accuracy and quality in reporting.

Among the performance highlights, Empower ranked in the 90th percentile nationwide for timeliness of prenatal and postpartum care, showcasing exceptional care in this critical area. Similarly, our adherence to monitoring protocols for blood glucose testing for adolescents on anti-psychotics also placed us in the 90th percentile nationwide. However, there are areas where there is room for improvement. Our cervical cancer screening rate of 27.64 percent falls below the peer average of 55.92 percent, indicating a need for increased screening efforts. Additionally, blood pressure control for diabetics at 25.7 percent is below the peer average of 63.55 percent, signaling a need for better management and control strategies.

The importance of HEDIS to Empower cannot be overstated. HEDIS measures help us identify areas for improvement and track progress, ensuring high standards of care for our members. They provide a framework for benchmarking our performance against other health plans and national standards, and they help us understand and enhance member experiences and outcomes, directly impacting satisfaction.

Empower Healthcare Solutions remains committed to delivering high-quality care and continuously improving our services. We thank all Empower providers for their dedication and participation in the HEDIS MY2023 season.

For more detailed results and future initiatives, please visit the Empower Healthcare Solutions website, getempowerhealth.com.



September is Suicide Prevention Awareness month

Suicidal thoughts, much like mental health conditions, can affect anyone regardless of age, gender or background. In fact, suicide is often the result of an untreated mental health condition. Suicidal thoughts, although common, should not be considered normal and often indicate more serious issues.

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month - a time to raise awareness of this stigmatized, and often taboo, topic. The National Association of Mental Illness (NAMI) uses this month to shift public perception, spread hope and share vital information to people affected by suicide. Their goal is ensuring that individuals, friends and families have access to the resources they need to discuss suicide prevention and to seek help

While suicide prevention is important to address year-round, Suicide Prevention Awareness Month provides a dedicated time to come together with collective passion and strength around a difficult topic. The truth is, we can all benefit from honest conversations about mental health conditions and suicide, because just one conversation can change a life.

According to a NAMI report, the individual and community impact of suicide is far reaching.

Individual impact:

- 79 percent of all people who die by suicide are male.
- Although more women than men attempt suicide, men are 4x more likely to die by suicide.
- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among people aged 10-14, the 3rd leading cause of death among those aged 15-24 and the 12th leading cause of death overall in the U.S.
- 46 percent of people who die by suicide had a diagnosed mental health condition — but research suggests

that 90 percent may have experienced symptoms of a mental health condition

Community Impact:

■ Annual prevalence of serious thoughts of suicide, high risk populations:

- U.S. Adults: 4.8 percent
- Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander: 7.4 percent
- Mixed/Multiracial: 8.2 percent
- American Indian/Alaska Native: 8.5 percent
- Young adults aged 18-25: 13 percent
- High school students: 22 percent
- LGBTQ youth: 41 percent

■ The highest rates of suicide in the U.S. are among American Indian/Alaskan Natives, followed by non-Hispanic whites

■ Lesbian, gay and bisexual youth are 4x more likely to attempt suicide than straight youth.

■ Transgender adults are nearly 9x more likely to attempt suicide at some point in their life compared to the general population.

■ Suicide is the leading cause of death for people held in local jails.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, call or text 988 immediately. If you are uncomfortable talking on the phone, you can chat the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988lifeline.org.

Get involved in Suicide Prevention Awareness Month by supporting and participating in the Arkansas End the Stigma 5K/Walks to be held in Bentonville, Sept 28 and in North Little Rock Oct. 12.

For additional information on the End the Stigma walks, go to namiarkansas.org.



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PROVIDER NOTES

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- ◆ Contracting/credentialing
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