

Introduction

The Quality Program is designed to enhance the quality of healthcare services for its members, with a focus on continuous improvement. The program's objectives include improving patient outcomes, enhancing patient safety, promoting efficiency and addressing health disparities. Quality improvement in healthcare is crucial for several reasons:

- **Patient-centered care:** Ensures healthcare services focus on the needs and preferences of patients, leading to improved satisfaction and outcomes.
- **Safety:** enhances safety for patients by reducing medical errors, preventive adverse events, and improving overall patient safety.
- **Efficiency:** Leads to more efficient use of resources, reducing waste and lowering costs.
- **Equity:** Helps address disparities in healthcare, ensuring all patients receive high-quality care regardless of their background or circumstances.
- **Effectiveness:** helps Healthcare providers adhere to the latest evidence-based guidelines and practices, leading to more effective care and better health outcomes.

Quality improvement is a vital tool in the mission to provide the best possible care for patients.

Strategies to improve Quality

1. **Data analysis and Reporting:** Collect and analyze data to identify areas of improvement. Use this data to set benchmarks and track progress over time.
2. **Patient-Centered Care:** Focus on the needs and preferences of the patient. This include providing education about their conditions, involving them in decision-making processes, and respecting their cultural values.
3. **Preventive Care:** Implement programs that promote healthy behaviors and early detections of diseases. They can include wellness programs, screenings, and immunizations.
4. **Care coordination:** Ensure that all provider involved in a patient's care are communicating effectively. This can help prevent medical errors and reduce unnecessary treatments.
5. **Performance Incentives:** Provide incentives for providers to improve the quality of care they deliver. They could be through pay-for-performance programs or public reporting of performance data.
6. **Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI):** Implement a CQI process that involves regularly assessing performance, identifying areas for improvement, implementing changes, and then reassessing to see if these changes led to improvements.

7. **Staff Training and Development:** Regularly train staff on the latest best practices in healthcare delivery. Encourage professional development and continuous learning.
8. **Patient Feedback:** Regularly solicit feedback from patients about their experiences with the health plan. Use this feedback to identify areas for improvement.
9. **Technology Utilization:** Leverage technology to improve care delivery, such as electronic health records (EHRs), telemedicine, and mobile health applications.
10. **Partnerships:** Collaborate with other organizations, such as hospitals, clinics, and community organizations, to improve the overall health of the population served by the health plan.

Quality Improvement Activities:

Annually, the quality program identifies improvement activities to highlight in the quality program overview. The following are a few samples of highlighted improvement activities and objectives for 2024.

2021-006: Healthy Start for Pregnant Women and Their Families:

- This Performance Improvement Project (PIP) is a collaboration of Minnesota Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) (“the Collaborative”). MCOs participating in this collaboration for their Prepaid Medical Assistance Program (PMAP) and MinnesotaCare products include Blue Plus, HealthPartners, Hennepin Health, South Country Health Alliance (South Country), Itasca Medical Care (IMCare), Medica, UnitedHealthcare (UHC), and UCare. Stratis Health provides project development support and assistance to the Collaborative.
- The PIP is intended to promote a “Healthy Start” for Minnesota children in the PMAP and MinnesotaCare populations by focusing on, and improving services provided to pregnant people and young children particularly in areas exhibiting the most significant racial and ethnic disparities. Each participating MCO has established a goal aimed at improving prenatal care, postpartum care, well-child visits and/or Combo-10 immunization rates with a focus on decreasing disparities relevant to the individual MCO population. To facilitate improvement, the MCOs will support joint Collaborative interventions as well as individual MCO specific strategies. The PIP is in part a continuation of the work of the 2021-2023 Healthy Start PIP but will also incorporate new interventions and partnerships as well as a new layer of community engagement to ensure that the work is meeting the needs of the community that it is serving.

2024 – 001: Breast Cancer Project:

- Breast cancer is the second most common cancer among women in the United States (some kinds of skin cancer are the most common). Black women are 41% more likely to die from breast cancer than White women according to the American Cancer Society¹. Screening can improve outcomes: early detection

¹ CDC Breast Cancer. (2023, June 6). Breast Cancer Statistics. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/statistics/index.htm>

reduces the risk of dying from breast cancer and can lead to a greater range of treatment options and lower health care costs².

- Blue Cross is collaborating with the Breast Cancer Gaps Project to enhance screening rates for Black Women through innovative, community-led strategies. The approach involves member and provider outreach, addressing care barriers, and evolving based on the project's findings.

2024 – 004: Depression and Diabetes Performance Improvement:

- This Performance Improvement Project (PIP) focuses on addressing the comorbidities of diabetes and depression for the Seniors in Minnesota Senior Health Options (MSHO) & Minnesota Senior Care Plus (MSC+) products and the Special Needs Basic Care (SNBC) populations. The PIP will be effective from 2024 through 2026 and will be used to address and treat member's depression and improve diabetes care and control.

² *Breast Cancer Screening*. (2018, July 19). NCQA. <https://www.ncqa.org/hedis/measures/breast-cancer-screening/>