



practice matters

Important information from UnitedHealthcare for physicians and other health care professionals and facilities serving UnitedHealthcare Medicaid members



Inside the Star Rating Initiative With James Carney, MD, MBA

As UnitedHealthcare’s National Medical Director for Physician Engagement for Medicare Solutions, Dr. Carney plays a lead role with others in developing and communicating strategies to aid physicians in supporting their patients to live healthier lives and manage chronic conditions by obtaining recommended preventive care screenings.

Why Star Ratings Matter for Quality of Care

“UnitedHealthcare’s mission is to help people live healthier lives. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that screenings and preventive care services continue to be under-utilized. Star ratings emphasize patient care and satisfaction, using national clinical quality measures – including screenings and preventive care and service quality measures – as well as patient feedback, so that health plans, physicians and members can work together to improve individual and total population quality of care and experiences,” said Dr. Carney.

UnitedHealthcare Approach

According to Dr. Carney: “UnitedHealthcare has dedicated enterprise-wide resources and personnel to work together to create a proactive member engagement, physician engagement and operational excellence approach to support Star Ratings improvement.

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For more information



Call our Provider Service Center at 866-675-1607



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This initiative promotes transparency about Star Ratings and is intended to provide physicians with information, tools such as View 360, and incentives that support the additional time and resources they need to strengthen the physician-patient relationship and to help them deliver high quality, comprehensive, affordable health care services.

Our approach is patient-centered and focuses on coordinated care for members to help them understand their benefits and receive the care they need to live healthier lives.”

About Dr. Carney

Dr. Carney began his career in the National Health Service Corps as an Internist working in under-served communities in Kentucky and Maryland. Later, he practiced in a staff model HMO, and then a small group practice in Delaware and Pennsylvania. He lives in Richmond, Virginia with his wife and is the father of two adult daughters.

To live a healthier life, Dr. Carney plays golf and tennis. His personal health goals include: maintaining a healthy body weight and an acceptable cholesterol profile to lower the risk for coronary artery disease; eating a well-balanced diet; and promoting overall physical mobility in order to stay active.

Quality Improvement Program

To continuously improve the care and services provided to members, UnitedHealthcare Community Plan uses Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) reporting to measure our health care performance. HEDIS is a set of standardized performance measures that are related to many significant public health issues. Nationwide, our HEDIS 2012 scores demonstrated improvements in the

number of our adult members who had their body mass index (BMI) screened, an increase in follow-up visits following hospitalizations for mental illness, and an increase in diabetic HbA1c and LDL testing.

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan will continue to target multiple areas for improvement in 2012 through national initiatives. Some of the areas targeted will include the number of yearly well visits received by children ages three to six, the number of timely prenatal and postpartum visits, and proper patient use of asthma medications.

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan also conducts annual member surveys to see how well we are meeting our member's needs. Our 2011 Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) surveys showed improvement in how our members rate their personal doctor, the specialists they see most often, and their overall health care. Members told us that they want it to be easy to get approvals for the tests and treatments they need through their Health Plan. We listened and in 2012 are working to improve processes in our prior authorization center.

If you would like further information about our Quality Improvement Program, our annual goals or our progress towards meeting our goals, please call 888-675-1607.

Cultural Needs

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan believes that members have a right to receive care that is culturally competent and respects their cultural and ethnic background and origins. Upon enrollment, information regarding primary language is obtained. Members are assisted in choosing a Primary Care Physician (PCP) that will meet their cultural needs. United HealthCare provides access to a language line for translation of communication between

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UnitedHealthcare staff and non-English speaking members. The language line use is tracked by the Customer Service Center and reported regularly to the health plan. Each health plan then assesses its practitioner availability to ensure that the cultural, ethnic, racial, and linguistic needs of its members are being met.

The Provider Directory is available at UHCCommunityPlan.com and lists the languages spoken in provider offices.

Recovery and Adherence

Clinicians want individuals in their care to get better and believe that if the treatment plans they offer are followed their patient's condition will improve. Yet treatment plans don't work when patients don't adhere to them. The connection between a lack of adherence and negative outcomes seems obvious, yet the World Health Organization (2003) states that for chronic illness, only 50 percent of patients adhere to their long-term therapy in developed countries.

Do the principles of recovery and resiliency offer any insights and support to approaching this problematic disconnect? There are several insights that can be adapted in most practices to help bridge this gap.

Focus on Strengths, Goals

Spend time on where patients are going and not where they are stuck.

A recovery-directed conversation with a patient focuses on individual strengths and personal goals rather than symptom severity or being sick. A conversation that focuses primarily on symptoms may further the negative self-image and sense hopelessness contributed to chronic illnesses. When a conversation includes a clear

focus on the patient and their personal goals, and frames medication as one strategy toward meeting those goals, the individual is often more motivated and hopeful.

Educate More, Direct Less

A recovery oriented interaction in each appointment provides education on treatment — including addressing widely held, but inaccurate beliefs about medication. Of critical importance is putting written educational materials in patient's hands. Written material supports different learning styles and affords an opportunity to easily share information with support networks.

Acknowledge Challenges and Invite Participation

It helps for patients to hear that many people find it very hard to take medicine regularly. Let them know that you want to hear the particular challenges they face in using medicine as a tool in their recovery plan. Inquiring about challenges lets patients know that you are committed to working with them toward solutions.

Support Engagement Through Tools and Community Resources

Engagement is not synonymous with compliance. Compliance means an individual obeys a directive from a health care provider. Engagement signifies that a person is involved in a process through which he harmonizes robust information and professional advice with his own needs, preferences and abilities in order to prevent, manage and cure disease¹.

Connecting members to local community resources can reduce isolation and increase treatment adherence. Links to reputable support groups can be found on our member portal.

Tools like the Wellness Recovery Action Plan® (WRAP) have been shown to significantly enhance skills for coping with prodromal

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symptoms, use of wellness tools in their daily routines, and hope for recovery². A free version of WRAP can be downloaded from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) web site.

SAMHSA recently issued this definition of recovery:

A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life and strive to reach their full potential.

SAMHSA further states:

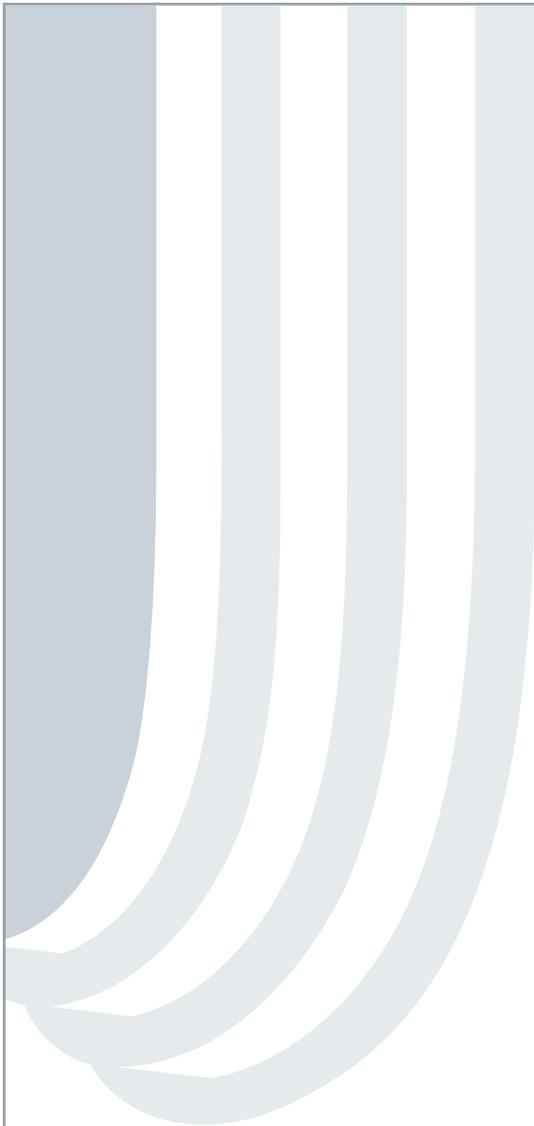
Recovery involves individual, family, and community strengths and responsibility: Individuals, families, and communities have strengths and resources that serve as a foundation for recovery. In addition, individuals have a personal responsibility for their own self-care and journeys of recovery.

The full article is available on the SAMHSA blog posting March 23, 2012.

These four simple tips reflect a recovery oriented way to support increased adherence while building a treatment plan that incorporates the patient's own strengths and goals while providing them with the information and support they need to achieve those goals.

By Sue Bergeson, Vice President of Consumer Affairs

- 1 A New Definition of Patient Engagement: What is Engagement and Why is it Important?, Center for Advancing Health © 2010
http://www.cfah.org/pdfs/CFAH_Engagement_Behavior_Framework_current.pdf.
- 2 Cook, J. A., Copeland, M. E., Hamilton, M. M., Jonikas, J. A., Razzano, L. A., Floyd, C. B., et al. (2009). Initial outcomes of a mental illness self-management program based on Wellness Recovery Action Planning. *Psychiatric Services*, 60(2), 246-249.



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