

Monitoring Follow Up After Behavioral Health Hospitalization

Western Behavioral Health (WBH), together with UPMC Health Plan, monitors the rate at which members receive timely follow up outpatient treatment after discharge from behavioral health hospitalizations. We monitor the percentage of members who attend an outpatient appointment within 7 and 30 days after discharge. Our rates have been as follows:

| <u>Calendar Year</u> | <u>7-day rate</u> | <u>30-day rate</u> |
|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 2000 | 53.38% | 72.97% |
| 2001 | 57.30% | 79.34% |
| 2002 | 65.98% | 83.87% |
| 2003 | 66.26% | 84.24% |

Our ambulatory 30-day follow up rates for Calendar Year 2003 surpasses the national HEDIS average of 74.42% and is just below the 90th percentile of 85.44%. Our 7-day rate also exceeds the national average of 54.44%.

Barriers to members keeping their follow up appointments include the following:

- Members may follow up with their primary care physician (PCP) instead of a behavioral health professional.
- Members may be unaware of the importance of follow up after hospitalization.
- Providers' expectations for follow up care may not be effectively communicated to the member prior to discharge.
- Providers may not have adequately assessed members' specific barriers to treatment or have not included the member/family in discharge planning.

To overcome the barriers to members keeping their follow up appointments, a number of interventions were implemented:

- Outreach to members and their providers after discharge to ensure that the follow up appointment was kept.
- Distribution of annual provider benchmarking reports to high volume inpatient providers to inform them of their follow up rates as compared to the network average.
- Publication of articles on the website for members and providers to educate them on the importance of follow up care.
- Prompting inpatient providers to educate members about the importance of follow up care while the member is still hospitalized.
- Encouraging providers to contact Care Managers for assistance in the event a barrier arises in discharge planning.

WBH and UPMC Health Plan will continue to monitor the follow up rate after behavioral health hospitalizations and will develop additional interventions as needed to improve the rates.

Increasing the Likelihood of Follow Up After Hospitalization

Ensuring member follow up after an inpatient stay is a challenge for many of our network providers. Missed appointments are undesirable to both members and providers. Representatives of the provider network have shared some tips that they have found useful to help ensure member follow up.

For the inpatient provider:

- Begin discharge planning as soon as possible after an inpatient admission
- When possible, involve family or other supports in discharge planning
- Address any barriers the member might have to keeping the aftercare appointment such as transportation, financial or child care complications
- Actively involve the member in the discharge planning process
- Ensure that the member leaves the hospital with a scheduled appointment

For the aftercare provider:

- Be flexible in your scheduling options, especially when a member is following up from an inpatient stay
- Briefly speak with member while they are hospitalized or on the day of discharge to establish a connection
- Consider making reminder phone calls prior to the member appointment

If you have found other techniques that are effective in promoting compliance with follow up appointments, we would appreciate hearing from you. Please call us at 1-888-251-2224 with your ideas and comments.