

Monitoring Follow Up After Hospitalization for Mental Illness

UPMC Health Plan Behavioral Health Services monitors two indicators related to Follow Up After Hospitalization for Mental Illness: the percentage of members who receive outpatient appointments within seven and 30 days after discharge from inpatient. The calendar year 2007 Commercial Healthcare Effectiveness and Data Information Set (HEDIS) rates for seven and 30 day follow up are 60.25% and 82.03%, respectively. These rates are above the national averages of 56.70% and 75.92%, respectively. The calendar year 2007 Medicare HEDIS rates are 60.02% and 81.44%.

Barriers to members keeping their follow up appointments include:

- Member specific barriers such as appointment conflicts with work schedule, child care, etc., not taken into consideration by providers scheduling aftercare appointments.
- Members not being aware that compliance with aftercare can improve treatment outcomes.
- Members following up with their primary care physician instead of a behavioral health professional.

Barriers specific to the Medicare population include:

- The cost of behavioral health care.
- Feeling overwhelmed about the number of their appointments; especially if also in need of physical health treatment.

UPMC Health Plan Behavioral Health Services has implemented many interventions to overcome the barriers to members keeping their follow up appointments, which include:

- Outreach to members and their aftercare provider to ensure that the appointment was kept.
- Providers are encouraged to call UPMC Health Plan Behavioral Health Services for assistance when member specific barriers arise during discharge planning.
- Annual distribution of Provider Benchmarking reports to high volume inpatient providers to inform them of their follow up rates as compared to the network average.
- The addition of the “Documented member education on the importance of follow-up care” indicator for inpatient provider record reviews.
- Publication of articles related to the importance of follow up care on both the member and provider sections of our website.

Representatives of our provider network have shared some additional tips that they have found helpful in ensuring member follow up.

Inpatient providers can:

- Begin discharge planning as soon as possible after admission.
- Involve family or other supports in discharge planning when possible.
- Ensure members have a scheduled aftercare appointment prior to discharge.

Aftercare providers can:

- Be flexible in scheduling options, particularly when a member is following up from an inpatient stay.
- Make reminder phone calls prior to the member appointment.

UPMC Health Plan Behavioral Health Services will continue to monitor follow up rates and develop additional interventions as needed. If you have found other techniques that are effective in promoting compliance with aftercare, we would appreciate hearing from you. Please call us at 1-888-251-2224 with your ideas and comments.