

Monitoring Initiation and Engagement of Alcohol and Other Drug Dependence Treatment

Western Behavioral Health (WBH), in conjunction with UPMC Health Plan, monitors the rates at which members with alcohol or drug dependence initiate and engage in treatment for these disorders. Participating in treatment is important to successful recovery.

To monitor these rates, we use a standardized national methodology contained in the Health Plan Employer Data and Information Set (HEDIS). Initiation is defined as the percentage of adults diagnosed with drug or alcohol dependence who begin treatment either through

- 1) an inpatient drug or alcohol admission or
- 2) an outpatient drug and alcohol program and any other drug or alcohol service within 14 days.

Treatment Engagement is defined as the percentage of members who receive two (2) additional drug or alcohol treatments within 30 days of initiating treatment.

- For calendar year 2003, the HEDIS rate for Initiation was 81.37%. The rate for Engagement was 76.01%.

Barriers to members starting and engaging in substance abuse treatment, include:

- Member resistance to drug and alcohol treatment.
- Members discontinue treatment after a period of relief or feeling better.
- Lack of supports or approval in the member's living environment may affect compliance with treatment.
- Members receiving drug and alcohol treatment are less likely to receive Case Management services aimed at maintaining linkages between the member and the service provider.

WBH and UPMC Health Plan implemented a number of interventions to improve these rates.

- Posting of educational resources on the website for members and providers.
- Distribution of an article to behavioral health providers regarding the importance of patient education on the treatment process which included a resource listing of self help and support groups available to members.
- Posting of treatment guidelines for substance abuse, screening and intervention information for primary care physicians (PCPs) on the UPMC Health Plan website.
- Ongoing data analysis to identify potential interventions to improve clinical care.

WBH and UPMC Health Plan will continue to monitor initiation and engagement in drug and alcohol treatment and develop additional interventions as necessary to improve our rates.