

Medicaid Managed Care Monthly

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Medicaid Managed Care Plans Work to Improve Pregnancy Outcomes

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Healthy People 2010 initiative sets a national goal of increasing to 90 percent the proportion of pregnant women who receive early and adequate prenatal care. Early and adequate prenatal care may reduce the incidence of low-birth-weight newborns, infant mortality and long-term health complications for the mother and infant. Prenatal visits give providers the opportunity to monitor the health of the mother and fetus and to educate the mother about proper nutrition, avoidance of risk behaviors, maintaining preventive care appointments, and the importance of well child visits during the first years of life. In addition to advocating prenatal care, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends that women have a postpartum visit four to six weeks after delivery so their doctors can detect any complications, provide assistance and answer questions.

Throughout the course of a woman's pregnancy, Medicaid managed care plans and providers play an integral role in encouraging preventive health visits and promoting the adoption of healthy behaviors for both the mother and the infant. One effective strategy to encourage mothers to schedule prenatal and postpartum visits is for managed care plans to offer incentive programs. All Ohio Medicaid managed care plans offer some type of prenatal incentive program, health educational materials, or care management services for high-risk pregnancies. Examples of managed care plan initiatives include:

Health educational materials.

These are mailed to expectant mothers and include helpful information on how to care for themselves and their babies. Several managed care plans also include a community resource guide, highlighting such things as the availability of local parenting classes or public transportation services.

Care management services.

These services are provided to high-risk pregnant mothers who could benefit from direct contact and intensive interventions, either through home visits or by telephone.

Appointment reminder postcards.

These are sent to pregnant mothers and continue after delivery to promote the importance of the infant receiving regular Healthchek visits (Ohio's EPSDT program), immunizations and lead screenings.

Member incentive programs.

Incentives are offered for women who complete the recommended prenatal visits during the second and third trimesters, the most critical time of a pregnancy, and postpartum visits.

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Collaborative partnerships.

Partnerships with community organizations and government agencies have been shown to improve health outcomes for infants and to promote support systems for pregnant women. Examples of partnerships include the following:

- Every Child Succeeds at Cincinnati Children's Hospital: <http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/svc/alpha/e/every-child/>
- Help Me Grow Programs: <http://www.ohiohelpmegrow.org/>
- Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Programs: <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/odhPrograms/ns/wicn/wic1.aspx>

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services monitors performance measures for managed care plans to ensure that Medicaid members receive access to medically necessary Medicaid-covered services. Special attention is paid to the timely initiation of the first prenatal visit, frequency of prenatal care visits and timely postpartum visits.

Since these performance measures were established, Medicaid managed care plans have shown continuous improvement. Highlights of the most recent data—for calendar year (CY) 2006—indicate that:

-The rate of timely initiation of prenatal care improved by 6% since 2002. The CY 2006 rate (87%) exceeded the national average (79%).

- Among managed care plan members with live births in 2006, 70% received 80% or more of the expected prenatal care visits. This exceeded the CY 2006 national average of 56% receiving 81% or more of expected prenatal care visits.

-The rate for women receiving postpartum visits also increased—by 27% from CY 2002 to 2006. Ohio's CY 2006 rate of 57% matched the national average.

By investing in preventive and prenatal care for pregnant women, Ohio Medicaid's managed care program prevents health complications caused by low birth weight, promotes positive health outcomes, and encourages ongoing healthy behaviors for mothers and their newborn infants.