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Healthcare Quality Watch

November 2020

IPRO Wins Four-Year Medicare QI Contract

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has awarded a four-year, \$12.96M contract to IPRO to serve as a Hospital Quality Improvement Contractor (HQIC) within the federal Network of Quality Improvement and Innovation Contractors. Awardees will provide targeted quality improvement assistance to small, rural and critical access hospitals and those hospitals that have been identified by CMS as requiring technical assistance. CMS has directed contractors to use innovation to drive results and to implement data-driven quality improvement interventions to assist hospitals in ensuring that safe, high-quality care is delivered to all Medicare beneficiaries. HQICs will partner with the targeted hospitals to help address high-priority patient safety topics areas that include infection control, pandemic readiness and response, and the opioid epidemic.

IPRO South Atlantic ESRD Team Recognized as National Leader

The IPRO End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Network of the South Atlantic has been selected as the 2020 recipient of the American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP) Dominick Gentile, MD, Memorial Award—an AAKP National Legacy Award. Recognizing extraordinary services and programs that significantly benefit the kidney patient community, the award is being given to the IPRO ESRD Network of the South Atlantic for its work on an AAKP-led Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Dissemination grant; its longstanding leadership in promoting the important work of the Southeastern Kidney Transplant Coalition; and its ongoing commitment to serving the kidney patient community of Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina.



IPRO Takes Over Rhode Island Hospital Review Activity

IPRO is now responsible for Medicaid acute care hospital utilization review (UR) in the state of Rhode Island, effective this fall. Under the terms of a contract with Rhode Island's Executive Office of Health & Human Services (EOHHS), IPRO oversees services provided by 12 hospitals and three healthcare systems across the state. IPRO activities also include screenings, concurrent review, retrospective analysis of Medicaid inpatient services, prior approval of admissions and review of nursing home placement screenings and cases drawn from the state's Department of Corrections. The organization has taken over review activity from the state's previous contract holder, Qualidigm of Connecticut. IPRO already has significant experience in Rhode Island, having provided oversight of the state's Medicaid managed care plans as the Medicaid External Quality Review Organization since 2003.

Feds Produce Third Medicaid Performance Scorecard

The third annual Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Scorecard released October 30 by CMS includes a new approach to evaluating performance.

For the first time, per-capita spending by state is listed next to quality and performance information, making it easier for readers to evaluate each state's cost and quality data. The scorecard has a new way of viewing state-specific data, and CMS believes it has arrived at a better design and navigation experience for users. CMS cites improvements in a number of quality indicators, including well-child and well-adolescent doctor visits, immunizations and diabetes care. The agency cites room for improvement in emergency room visits, women receiving postpartum care visits and hospital admissions for diabetes complications among adults. Per capita spending ranges from \$14,387 in North Dakota to \$1,807 in Puerto Rico. To view the Medicaid and CHIP (MAC) Scorecard, visit www.medicaid.gov/state-overviews/scorecard/index.html.



CMS Issues Final Medicaid Managed Care Rule

States will have more flexibility in Medicaid managed care rate setting but will continue to be responsible for implementing Quality Rating Systems, under a final federal rule issued this fall. The agency says regulations issued in 2016 were too prescriptive and that it engaged in additional review with state Medicaid officials to arrive at a less burdensome approach to rule-setting. Among other changes, the rule revises network adequacy standards to recognize the special needs of rural populations and to facilitate telehealth opportunities. Most provisions in the final rule go into effect 30 days from issuance—the rule also applies to the Children's Health Insurance Program, otherwise known as CHIP. The entire text of the final rule is available in the Federal Register and is summarized in a CMS Fact Sheet available at cms.gov/newsroom.

COVID-19 UPDATES

CMS Offers Vaccine Access Blueprint

Medicare beneficiaries will receive COVID-19 vaccines free of charge, whether they're enrolled in managed care plans or receive services on the traditional fee-for-service basis, under a plan announced October 28 by CMS. The plan specifies that the vaccine will also be available without cost-sharing for Medicaid patients, uninsured individuals and most privately-insured health plan enrollees—as specified by the recently passed CARES Act. The CMS announcement outlines how hospitals will receive special "outlier payments" when treatment costs exceed certain thresholds. States will be required to provide vaccine administration to Medicaid recipients without cost-sharing for the duration of the public health emergency and may have to seek federal authority to require cost sharing after the emergency. For more information, visit cms.gov/newsroom.

Biden Team Announces Transition COVID-19 Advisory Board

Public Health experts David Kessler, MD, Vivek Murthy, MD, MBA, and Marcella Nunez-Smith, MD, will chair the newly-created Transition COVID-19 Advisory Board, according to a Nov 13 announcement by the Biden-Harris Transition Team. Kessler was FDA Commissioner under

Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton; Murthy served as U.S. Surgeon General from 2014 to 2017; Nunez-Smith is an Associate Professor of Internal Medicine, Public Health and Management at Yale University. The Advisory Group is described as a "diverse and experienced group of doctors and scientists" that will work with state and local public health officials to address the nation's COVID-19 crisis. The Biden team has announced a seven-point COVID strategy that emphasizes free testing, fixing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) problems, and use of evidence-based prevention guidelines. The President-Elect has also announced a Racial and Ethnic Disparities Task Force that will report to Vice President-Elect Harris. For more information, visit buildbackbetter.com.

IPRO is a non-profit organization that works with government agencies, providers and consumers to implement innovative programs that bring policy ideas to life. For over 35 years we've made creative use of clinical expertise, emerging technology and data solutions to make the healthcare system work better.



Better healthcare, realized.

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