

Fact Sheet

Health Equity Enhanced Payment Initiative

Carolina Access Equity Payments Explained

To support the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) goals to achieve health equity, NC Medicaid is introducing an enhanced payment to Carolina Access primary care practices serving beneficiaries from parts of the state with high poverty rates. This initiative ultimately aims to improve access to primary care and preventive services for Medicaid and NC Health Choice beneficiaries in North Carolina at a time when historically marginalized populations are facing challenges highlighted by the COVID-19 public health emergency. These payments will be available for three months as a limited initiative from April-June 2021.

HOW ARE THESE PAYMENTS DETERMINED?

To be eligible for these payments, the practice must be Carolina Access I or II. Practices must meet a minimum beneficiary poverty score, determined by the average poverty rate for the census tract of the beneficiaries assigned to each practice's location. DHHS determined the poverty score for the practice. The payments are made on a per member per month basis. Practices will receive an enhanced per member per month payment if the poverty score falls into Poverty Tier I or Poverty Tier II. The poverty scores are centered on the Medicaid beneficiary average of 19%.

HOW MUCH WILL A PRACTICE RECEIVE?

The amount that a Carolina Access provider will receive depends on the poverty score based on the average poverty rate of the beneficiaries' address for the beneficiaries assigned to each practice's location. Enhanced per member per month payment amounts will be as follows:

- \$9.00 per member per month enhancement for practice locations identified as Poverty Tier I (poverty scores above 17% through 21%)
- \$18.00 per member per month enhancement for practice locations identified as Poverty Tier II (poverty scores above 21%)

WHAT DOES A PROVIDER HAVE TO DO TO RECEIVE THESE PAYMENTS?

Enhanced payments for eligible practices will automatically be added to monthly Carolina Access payments (and Advanced Medical Home glidepath payments for qualifying practices) for April – June 2021. Practices receiving enhanced payments must complete a practice survey following this health equity initiative; failure to complete the survey may result in NC DHHS recouping payments. The survey will be provided by email and will seek to understand how the payments advanced health equity for the practice and will inform future initiatives. Practices are directed to use these funds to enhance primary care medical home services to support beneficiaries to ultimately address health equity.

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS TO IMPROVE HEALTH EQUITY?

Some examples of actions that practices can take to improve health equity include, but are not limited to:

- Making permanent enhancements to telehealth access;
- Engaging patients to close care gaps in key health areas such as prevention and maternal and child health;
- Staff training on implicit bias, trauma informed care and health equity;
- Quality and clinical data analysis and action plans;
- Recruitment of key staff to reduce health inequity such as clinical pharmacists, dieticians, community health workers, health coaches and doulas;
- COVID-19 specific response such as additional vaccine outreach and distribution efforts to historically marginalized populations;
- Improving the practice infrastructure to address non-medical drivers of health; and
- Investing in behavioral health supports and enhancing integration of behavioral and physical health.

ARE THERE RESOURCES FOR HOW TO SPEND THESE FUNDS?

There are many resources available on evidence-based interventions to improve health and reduce disparities. Some of these include:

- CDC Practitioners Guide for Advancing Health Equity:
<https://www.cdc.gov/NCCDPHP/dch/pdf/health-equity-guide/Practitioners-Guide-section1.pdf>
- AAFP Addressing Social Determinants of Health in Primary Care:
https://www.aafp.org/dam/AAFP/documents/patient_care/everyone_project/team-based-approach.pdf
- IHI Achieving Health Equity:
<http://www.ihl.org/resources/Pages/IHIWhitePapers/Achieving-Health-Equity.aspx>
- NCHA Resource Center:
<https://www.ncha.org/equity-disparities-resource-center/#1545154155925-6d0789a1-bfe3>

WILL THESE PAYMENTS CONTINUE AFTER JUNE?

NC Medicaid will evaluate this initiative with a practice survey to understand how the enhanced payments supported the unique needs of beneficiaries living in high poverty areas of the state and from historically marginalized populations. The information gathered from this initiative will assist with more targeted investments in programs that are shown to improve beneficiary access to care in key areas where health disparities and disparities in care exist. The work will inform NC Medicaid's broader goals of promoting primary care and prevention while reducing the longstanding health disparities that were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

For questions related to your NCTracks provider information, please contact the NCTracks Call Center at 800-688-6696. To update your information, please log into NCTracks (<https://www.nctracks.nc.gov>) provider portal to verify your information and submit a MCR or contact the NCTracks Call Center.

For all other questions, please contact the NC Medicaid Contact Center at 888-245-0179.