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HEALTH PLAN CONVERSATION GUIDE

Start a conversation with your health plan and hold it accountable

PURPOSE

Employer-purchasers (“Purchasers”) can meet with their contracted health plans on a regular basis to learn more about the services and supports they provide for the subset of plan participants who are facing the symptoms and stresses of serious illness. This is an opportunity for Purchasers to ensure that their health plans are providing sufficient attention and resources, as expressed in their RFI response, to the population of patients living with serious illness. Purchasers can use this conversation guide during their regular meetings with health plans to get answers to important questions and track progress.

These questions are organized into categories that correspond to those in the “Request for Information (RFI): Access to Comprehensive and High-Quality Serious Illness Care” and are meant to help structure Purchasers’ ongoing meetings with their contracted plans.

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| Category | Questions |
| I. CARE FOR SERIOUSLY ILL PLAN PARTICIPANTS (GENERAL QUESTIONS) | What improvements has health plan made to existing support and services provided to assist plan participants and families facing serious illness? |
| Potential prompts:   * Specific changes, such as in-home services offerings, and/or extending in-home services to support for family caregivers, including parents? * Defined processes to identify plan participants living with serious illness and/or multiple chronic conditions? * Access to case managers with specific skill training in advance care planning and goals-of-care conversation skills, symptom assessment and management, and training on the specific benefits available? * Processes in place that can expedite access to needed services? |
| II. PROVIDER NETWORK | What has health plan done to ensure network providers have advance care planning and goals-of-care conversation skills and symptom management competencies, and that specialty-trained palliative care providers are included in the network? |
| Potential prompts:   * Using payment incentives to encourage providers to get training in advance care planning and goals-of-care conversation skills? In symptom assessment and management skills? * Financial incentives or requirements for network hospitals to acquire palliative care certifications, such as Joint Commission Advanced Certification in Palliative Care? * Financial incentives for physicians and nurse practitioners to acquire palliative care designations or certifications? * Investments in provider training? HIT that supports advance care planning and symptom assessment? * Requirements for ACOs to have both hospital- and community-based (including in-home) palliative care services, with 24/7 response capabilities, in place or available by referral? |
| How does health plan separately evaluate the quality of care plan participants with serious illness receive? |
| III. MEDICAL MANAGEMENT | What improvements has health plan made to existing case management services for adult and pediatric plan participants with serious illness? |
| Potential prompts:   * Specialized training for case managers, including advance care planning and goals-of-care conversation skills? * Inclusion of symptom burden and psychosocial assessments? * Requires a documented palliative care assessment and care plan as a component of prior authorization for services involved in treating a serious illness? * Eliminates, or at least expedites, prior authorization for services or products needed to reduce pain and suffering for seriously ill plan participants? * Policies or procedures in place to expedite appeals and grievances for plan participants living with serious illness? |
| IV. ADVANCE CARE PLANNING | What has health plan done to improve the quality and proportion of advance care planning and goals-of-care conversations among those who would benefit from them? |
| Potential prompts:   * Training and support for health plan staff, especially case managers? * Training and/or informational resources provided to network providers? * Educational resources for plan participants? |
| V. CAREGIVING | What has health plan done to improve programs and services to assist family caregivers of plan participants facing serious illness? |
| Potential prompts:   * Extension of in-home services offerings to family caregivers, including parents of children with serious illness? * Improved benefits for marriage and family counseling for plan participants with serious illness? |
| VI. END-OF-LIFE CARE & BEREAVEMENT | Has health plan made improvements to end-of-life care and bereavement services available to plan participants and their families? |
| Potential prompts:   * Changes to hospice benefits, such as expanded eligibility and/or allowing concurrent treatment and hospice care? * Inclusion of grief/bereavement specialists in behavioral health network * Assess quality of hospice provider network? * Removal from the network of continuously poorly performing hospice agencies? * Tracking the experience of care that a plan participant/family has received leading up to and at end of life? * Tracking utilization and average length of stay in hospice for all individual plan participants who have died. |