

Health Plus News

PROVIDER

PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITY'S HEALTH

www.healthplus-ny.org

Providers, call toll free 1-800-450-8753.

Behavioral health Routine screenings aid early detection



Primary care physicians can have a major impact on the early identification and treatment of behavioral health problems. The most common mental health problems encountered in the primary care setting are *depression, anxiety, depression mixed with anxiety and other stress-related conditions.*

Psychiatric disorders often coexist with physical illnesses and/or may present with physical complaints in the primary care setting. As a result, common psychiatric disorders often go unrecognized, leading to both increased morbidity and costs.

Make screenings routine

In recognition of this, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) have

emphasized the importance of routine behavioral health screenings as a part of standard practice. Routine behavioral health screening is recommended at the same periodicity as well visits—once per year for children and once every three to five years for adults. In addition, the New York State Department of Health includes such screenings in their requirements for managed care plans.

Use standardized tools

Standardized screening tools have been found useful in identifying common mental health problems in the primary care setting.

We would strongly encourage the routine use of any reliable and valid behavioral health screening tool with which you are

familiar. Random office visits and chart reviews by HEALTH PLUS Quality Improvement staff will include evidence of behavioral health screening on a routine basis as an item to be reviewed.

Notable exceptions

Please note that some screening tools do not include specific questions to screen for alcohol and drug abuse. However, the AAP and the AAFP have emphasized the need to routinely assess substance usage and provide anticipatory guidance as appropriate to the age of the individual. (Refer to the AAP policy statement in *Pediatrics*, 1998, 101:125-128).

If you have questions concerning behavioral health screenings or wish to discuss a referral, please feel free to contact *Health Plus Behavioral Health* at 1-800-727-0910 during business hours of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, the *24-hour behavioral health advice line* at 1-866-223-9500, or *Member Services* at 1-800-300-8181. Members can also self refer to any participating behavioral health provider.

Free CME courses available online at www.medscape.com

HEALTH PLUS

205 Montague, Third Floor
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Public health initiatives

New York's priorities and HEALTH PLUS

HEALTH PLUS has consistently tried to support the major public health priorities of the New York City Department of Health and New York State Department of Health. We have an excellent working relationship with our public health agencies and our staff works hard to support the common goals.

The new city Commissioner of Health, Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H., recently spelled out his current priorities in disease prevention and control. Some of Dr. Frieden's priorities include:

- Tobacco control and smoking cessation
- HIV prevention and treatment
- Assisting those with mental health issues, developmental disabilities and chemical dependency
- Fostering nutrition and regular exercise
- Appropriate health care for all, including disease screenings and immunizations

We at HEALTH PLUS are active in each of these priority areas. Some of the things we are doing include:

- Fostering disease management for members with asthma to ensure that they get appropriate services in accordance with recognized care guidelines
- Offering smoking cessation to parents of children with asthma, whether or not they are Plan members, through our asthma disease management program
- Providing case management services to all members who are infected with HIV

■ Providing integrated medical and behavioral health case management to members who need both kinds of care

■ Providing basic member education on nutrition and exercise

Our efforts have already shown some success. We have reduced ER use due to asthma, and have increased the number of people with asthma on control medications. Thanks to *Project Immunize*, our Plan's immunization rates remain among the highest in New York State.

Our future plans include an emphasis on improving immunization rates by identifying best physician practices and disseminating these to our child care providers, providing information for physicians on appropriate antibiotic use, working with providers to improve hemoglobin A1c monitoring for our members with diabetes and improving primary care screening rates for alcohol and tobacco use. In this last effort, we will also promote use of the *New York State Smoker's Quitline* (1-888-609-6292) and *Quitsite*, www.nysmokefree.com.

We look forward to further communication with you on these critical public health initiatives and hope you will make some time to talk with our Provider Relations representatives when they visit. We need the active involvement of all our providers if we are to be successful.

Vaccines in short supply

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the New York State Department of Health recently reported shortages of a number of vaccines that protect against preventable childhood diseases. Those vaccines include *DtaP*, *MMR*, *PCV7* and *varicella*.

Regarding *varicella*, providers are being advised to delay vaccination of children 12 to 18 months until 18 months or the 2-year visit. For children whose dose of varicella vaccine is delayed, vaccine providers should *implement an effective call-back system* when the vaccine becomes available.

All HEALTH PLUS participating physicians should remain informed about temporary changes in recommended immunization practices by logging on to the CDC's National Immunization Program Web site at www.cdc.gov, the New York State Department of Health Immunization Program Web site at www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/immun/immunization.htm, or by contacting your HEALTH PLUS Provider Relations Representative for copies of these updates.

In addition, throughout the next few months, all HEALTH PLUS physicians will be receiving an information packet containing updated guidelines as well as resources to enhance their immunization practices.

**August is National
Immunization
Awareness Month**

HEALTH PLUS supports city initiatives

New York City Commissioner of Health Thomas Frieden, M.D., M.P.H., recently announced priorities in public health initiatives to be implemented by the New York City Department of Health. In an open letter to New Yorkers (www.nyc.gov/html/doh), Dr. Frieden stated that New York City is "one of the healthiest cities" in the world and that Mayor Bloomberg "has a strong commitment to public health and to the health of all New Yorkers." HEALTH PLUS is also committed to improving the public health of New York City residents.

Tobacco use

According to Dr. Frieden, "there are 1.1 million smokers in New York City," two-thirds of which attempt to cease smoking but can't. As a provider, you are responsible for screening your patients on tobacco use and, if they smoke, advising them of their options for smoking cessation. You can refer patients to

the city's Smoker's Quitline (1-888-609-6292) as well as the HEALTH PLUS *Free & Clear* Program. As mentioned in our spring 2000 newsletter, *Free & Clear* is a clinically proven, theoretically sound and comprehensive behavior modification program. **Please remember to document screening for tobacco use for each adult and adolescent patient.**

Refer patients who need smoking cessation assistance to the Member Services phoneline at 1-800-300-8181 to register for the *Free & Clear* Program.

Overweight and obesity

Weight management, through improved nutrition and exercise, is essential to reducing heart disease, obesity and related illnesses. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the obesity prevalence rate in New York State for 2000 was 17.2 percent, up from 12.8 percent reported in 1991.

When working with overweight



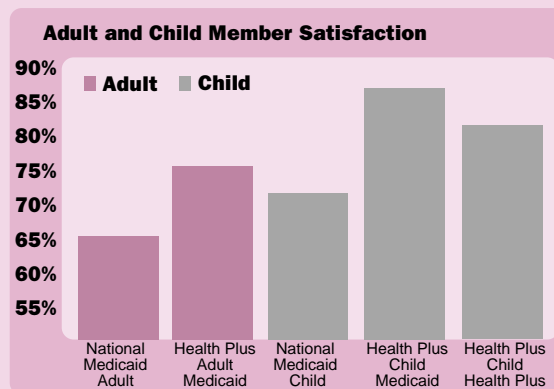
and obese patients, even small amounts of weight loss or prevention of weight gain can make significant differences. Each office visit can be an opportunity for an obesity intervention that could make the difference for that patient (*Archives of Family Medicine*, 2000; 9:631-638). For more information on obesity and weight management, please access the CDC Nutrition and Physical Activity Web site at www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/trend/index.htm.

In addition, HEALTH PLUS is also one of the sponsors for "*Lighten Up Brooklyn*," a health initiative led by Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz to encourage healthy eating, exercise and weight loss among

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Member satisfaction remains high

HEALTH PLUS continues to have very high member satisfaction, with over 80 percent of our members rating us eight, nine or 10 on a 10-point scale. In the fall of 2001, HEALTH PLUS had an independent consumer research organization conduct a Medicaid Adult and Medicaid Child Consumer Assessment of Health Plans (CAHPs) Survey and a modified CAHPs survey for *Child Health Plus*. The overall satisfaction scores with HEALTH PLUS results were



76 percent, 86 percent and 83 percent, respectively. The national Medicaid average was 65 percent for adults and 71 percent for children.

HEALTH PLUS scored highly in customer service results ranging from 76 percent to 82 percent—significantly above the national

Medicaid average of 66 percent.

The one specific area in which HEALTH PLUS falters is members obtaining care as quickly as desired. Members felt that it took longer than they wanted to get an appointment when they were sick and that they almost always waited longer than 15 minutes to see the doctor (50 percent versus a national average of 35 percent).

HEALTH PLUS is proud of its member satisfaction results in overall satisfaction and high customer service. We will strive to improve our members' satisfaction with getting care as quickly as they want.

Ensure children receive immunizations by age 2!

HEALTH PLUS services update

InfoPlus, our Provider Service Center, is now available online at www.healthplus-ny.org, and also by phone at 1-800-639-6968.

On the Web site, just click on the "InfoPlus" tab and you will have access to the following services on your computer:

- Verify member eligibility for the last 12 months and the assigned primary care physician.
- Inquire on the status of referral to a specialist (number of specialty visits authorized).
- Inquire on the status of submitted claims.
- Generate referrals to a HEALTH PLUS participating specialist.

You will need your access code and personal identification number (PIN) to gain access. Please contact your Provider Services Representative at 1-800-450-8753 if you have not received your code and PIN.

At HEALTH PLUS, we are committed to providing you with the highest quality services to make your job easier.

HEALTH PLUS

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overweight Brooklyn residents.

From April 16 to June 15, Brooklyn residents are offered free nutrition seminars, healthy eating advice, exercise programs

and opportunities to participate in a contest to help them reach goals of long-term, sustained weight loss and a healthier lifestyle. For more information, contact the *Office of the Brooklyn Borough President* at (718) 802-3830 or visit www.brooklyn-usa.org.

Claims Corner

The Claims Corner column continues to run quarterly, answering your questions about claims submission and payment. If you have a question for Claims Corner, please submit it to Barbara Thompson, Director of Claims, HEALTH PLUS, 5800 Third Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11220.

Q: *Dear HEALTH PLUS: I received a claim denial for an invalid procedure code, but the procedure displayed on the remittance advice was XXXXX. I did not submit XXXXX as my procedure code. Should I resubmit the claim with the procedure code I originally submitted?*

A: Dear Provider: Never resubmit a denied claim. Send a letter with a copy of the Remittance Advice indicating the proper valid procedure code.

The XXXXX displayed on the Remittance Advice is our system's way of displaying a missing, incomplete or invalid procedure code. Resubmitting the claim will only result in another denial with the XXXXX code.

Dear HEALTH PLUS:

Q: *The billing system I use creates a separate claim for each line item (service) rendered on a date of service. Is submission of these services on multiple claims a problem?*

Dear Provider:

A: Fragmenting your services over various claims causes delays in claim processing and can result in erroneous rejections for duplication of services.

All services rendered by a provider on a given date of service should be submitted on the same claim or on consecutive claims stapled together, if these are more than six lines of details.

Health Plus News PROVIDER

PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITY'S HEALTH

Tom Early
Executive Director

Clifford D. Marbut, M.D., M.P.H.
Chief Medical Officer

Sylvia D'Alessandro
Director of Network Development
and Provider Relations

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Where to find information

Provider Services 1-800-450-8753

Provider Interactive Voice Response Line
(24-hour Member Eligibility, Claims Status,
Specialist Referrals) 1-800-639-6968

Health Services (718) 630-0123

Health Education (718) 491-7584

Web site: www.healthplus-ny.org

For expert health information, HEALTH PLUS members may call Tele-Nurse Plus 24 hours a day, seven days a week: 1-800-437-7587.