



Employers as health care purchasers

Using performance measures in contracting

Employers make a major investment in the health and well-being of their employees and families by offering health benefits. They want to be able to provide strong benefits packages to employees while continuing to offer competitive products and services to customers. This can be a challenge as U.S. businesses face rising health care costs and significant variation in the price and quality of care across clinics, medical groups, and hospitals.

Employers can use performance measures to inform purchasing decisions and get better value out of the investment they make in their employees. Washington State created a Statewide Common Measure Set to track and publicly report health plan and medical group performance over time to ensure employers are buying high-quality, high-value health care for their employees.

Background on the state performance measures

Directed by legislation in 2014, Governor Jay Inslee appointed a statewide performance measurement committee to identify metrics for Washington State and other public and private employers and purchasers to use for purchasing health care. Selected metrics are markers of whether providers and health plans are working together to ensure the right care is being delivered at the right time according to clinical best practices. The focus of the measures include:

- Access to care — Are children and adults regularly accessing care that meets their needs?
- Prevention — Are patients getting recommended health screenings they need to stay well?
- Acute care — Are hospitals doing what they can to promote the best patient outcomes?
- Chronic care — Are patients with chronic conditions getting needed care to manage their health?

The Washington Health Alliance, a nonprofit regional health improvement organization, publishes the annual Community Checkup report at www.wacommunitycheckup.org. It uses the Measures data from health care claims, state agencies, partner organizations, and patient experience surveys. Employers can compare results from the Community Checkup to inform their health care purchasing.

How all employers can use the common measure set

There are a number of ways employers can support their employees in identifying and obtaining quality care.

- Share the Community Checkup with your employees in team meetings, email, and gathering spaces such as break rooms to educate your employees on choosing high-quality providers.
- Share the Own Your Health website with your employees to educate your employees to become active participants in their own health care at www.ownyourhealthwa.org.
- Consider the needs of your employees and use the measures to inform benefit design and creation of employee wellness programs.

How large self-insured employers can use the measures (1,000+ covered lives)

Large employers typically have greater ability to customize their health plan contracts. Requiring reporting of select measures from the Statewide Common Measure Set through contracts will help obtain a better understanding of the quality of health care your employees are receiving.

Employers can partner with their brokers and health plans to develop strategies, such as connecting provider payment to the quality of care, that can improve the quality of care their employees receive. While there is not a “one-size fits all” when it comes to selecting the measures to include in your health plan contract, below are suggested measures to consider adding to your contracts with health plans based on the demographics of your employees and their dependents.

Majority of Employees and Dependents are 18 to 40 years old:

- Staying on antidepressant medication (12 weeks)
- Staying on antidepressant medication (6 months)
- Cervical cancer screening
- Chlamydia screening
- Child immunization
- Well-child visits (ages 3 to 6 years)
- Medication management for people with asthma

Majority of Employees and Dependents are 40 years old and above:

- Staying on antidepressant medication (12 weeks)
- Staying on antidepressant medication (6 months)
- Breast cancer screening
- Colon cancer screening
- Cervical cancer screening
- Medication management for people with asthma
- Blood sugar (HbA1c) testing for people with diabetes
- Blood pressure control (<140/90)

Learn more about Paying for Value on the Healthier Washington website:
www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/healthier-washington/paying-value