

# Follow-up after hospitalization for mental illness

HEDIS<sup>®1</sup> Measure

Members should see an outpatient psychiatric or behavioral health specialist within 7 and 30 calendar days of discharge after hospitalization for a mental health condition. Proper follow-up care is associated with lower rates of readmission and with a greater likelihood that improvements will continue. The period immediately following discharge from inpatient care is recognized as a time of increased vulnerability. Ensuring continuity of care by attending follow-up visits helps detect early post-hospitalization medication problems and provides continuing support that improves treatment outcomes and reduces health care costs.<sup>2</sup>

## Measure

Members 6 years of age and older who were hospitalized for treatment of selected mental health conditions and who had an outpatient visit, an intensive outpatient encounter, or partial hospitalization with a mental health practitioner. Two rates are reported.

1. The percentage of patients who received follow-up within 30 days of discharge
2. The percentage of patients who received follow-up within 7 days of discharge<sup>3</sup>

## Care Coordinator Steps

If a member was recently hospitalized for mental illness, ask him or her if they have a follow-up appointment made with a mental health provider within 7 or 30 days of discharge.

- If the member does not have an appointment, make a three-way call to their clinic to set up the appointment.
- Ask if the member has transportation or interpreter services arranged. If not, assist the member with arranging those services.

## Types of visits that “count”

- Visit with a mental health practitioner (see below)
- Visit to a behavioral health care facility
- Transitional Care Management Services (TCM)
- Partial hospitalization

## “Mental health practitioner” includes:

- Psychiatrist
- Psychologist
- LICSW
- Mental Health NP & CNS
- Licensed therapist and counselor

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## Tips for Care Coordinators when talking to the member

- Remember, members are more likely to show for an appointment if they have talked to someone about it or were assisted in making the appointment.
- Remind them that consistent follow-up care is very important and can prevent another hospitalization.
- Reassure the member that they are not alone – one in four Americans have a mental health diagnosis<sup>4</sup>. There are many services available and people that can help.

1 HEDIS is a registered trademark of the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA).

2 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, “National Quality Measures Clearing House,” accessed Sept 2, 2014, <http://www.qualitymeasures.ahrq.gov/content.aspx?id=46995&search=hospitalization+for+mental+illness>

3 Peter Bach et al. HEDIS 2014 Technical Specifications for Health Plans (National Committee for Quality Assurance 2013), 181–183

4 Kessler RC et al. Prevalence, severity, and comorbidity of 12-month DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Arch Gen Psychiatry* 2005; 62:617–627.