

Wyoming Appropriate Care Guidance

Providing care in the right place.



Inappropriate and excessive use of emergency rooms hurts everyone. It delays services for people who need immediate treatment, increases costs unnecessarily and consumes resources that could be used elsewhere.

Improving ER services means identifying high-risk patients and educating them about effective, appropriate care options.

Using emergency room services for care that could be provided in more appropriate settings is both expensive and inadequate – especially for those with chronic conditions that require ongoing medical attention. Inappropriate use and frequent visits are a major cost driver for Medicaid program budgets nationwide: a visit to the ER can easily cost hundreds – or even thousands – of dollars.

This situation happens daily across the country, and the State of Wyoming is no exception. In 2012, the state began an initiative to identify and control sources of increasing costs to their Medicaid program. Emergency room use claims were analyzed and it was discovered that a potential \$3 million to \$4 million in cost savings could be achieved by better managing the care-seeking behaviors of frequent ER users, educating them about preventive and primary care and increasing their use of community based services.

Identifying the Cost Drivers

As a longtime partner of Wyoming Medicaid, Conduent was asked to help the state implement an Appropriate Care Guidance strategy to manage Medicaid members with high rates of ER services use. We started by analyzing claims data to assess the root causes of the problem. Our analysis showed that 12 percent of total eligible members were “frequent users” who visited the ER three or more times during the previous 12 months. These visits accounted for the majority of Wyoming’s ER expenditures – 66 percent. More alarming was that fewer than 4 percent of Medicaid-eligible members used the ER six or more times during the year – but their visits accounted for more than 38 percent of ER costs.

Education for More Effective Care

We are currently developing a solution to reduce Wyoming Medicaid clients’ ER visits. As part of the process, we have launched the Appropriate Care Site pilot program at Cheyenne Regional Medical Center (CRMC). This pilot will provide evidence-based approaches that, if successful, can be implemented statewide.

The Appropriate Care Guidance program helps Wyoming Medicaid members find more appropriate sources for healthcare.

Our partnership with the Wyoming Department of Health, CRMC and Cheyenne-area Medical Homes has produced several interventions for the Appropriate Care Site program. Using information about frequent ER users collected from CRMC, we followed up with them to uncover reasons for using ER services. We also used our Total Health Record (THR) solution to examine utilization histories of Medicaid clients who used ER services. This collaborative tool enables care managers and healthcare providers to review medical and pharmacy utilization and critical clinical triggers. THR helps us identify the gaps in care and treatment exceptions that can lead to an ER visit.

The Appropriate Care Site program also includes a 24/7 Nurse Advice Line. Promoted in areas with high rates of ER use, it enables Wyoming Medicaid clients to receive a consultation from a Registered Nurse before a potential use of ER services. Our goal with these interventions is to educate frequent users about preventive care measures and alternative resources available from the Medicaid program helping the state avoid future care costs. In the coming months, we plan to expand our outreach through social media and collaborate with Medical Homes on frequent user case management.

To control costs further, we have been contacting Wyoming Medicaid clients with extreme, frequent ER utilization rates (more than 12 visits during a 12-month period) and offering enrollment in more intensive case management programs. This specialized outreach uses collaborative care plan development that includes goals and preferred interventions shared between the care manager, the primary provider or medical home and the ER staff. By working together, we aim to better manage the resources needed to serve this small-but-costly population.

Improving the Outlook for Health and Cost Control

We began our frequent user analysis in July 2012 and launched the pilot program for Wyoming Medicaid in October 2012. We will follow up with quarterly ER activity reports starting in the first quarter of 2013 so we can track the Appropriate Care Site program's progress and measure its effectiveness.

As we continue working with the state, we expect the Appropriate Care Guidance program to help members throughout Wyoming find more appropriate and less-costly sources for healthcare. Our intervention and education programs will help free resources that would be spent unnecessarily. And that will help the state focus on initiatives that improve program quality while providing more effective care for its citizens.

You can learn more about us at www.conduent.com/govhealthcare.

