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2016 PORTFOLIO HIGHLIGHTS | SMALL BUSINESS GROUP

Small group definition remains unchanged but our portfolio has expanded

When President Obama signed the Protecting Affordable Coverage for Employees (PACE) Act on Oct. 7 (see related [article](#)), it changed plans that were underway in the small group market. Until then, the definition of small group was set to be expanded from 1–50 employees to 1–100 employees effective Jan. 1, 2016. The expansion was a provision of the Affordable Care Act. Following the approval of the PACE Act, Washington State Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler announced that the existing small group definition of 1–50 employees will remain in place.

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*Kelly Chrisman,
Manager, Small
Business Group and
Producer Relations*

GUEST COLUMN:

What we learned at the fall workshops

By Kelly Chrisman

Only a couple of weeks ago, I finished a yearly adventure: crisscrossing the state for our annual Fall Producer Workshops. Held at eight locations, this year's workshops had some of the best attendance ever, attracting around 800 of you, with many venues at capacity.

Our goal with the workshops is always to give you all the information we can to help you be successful during the coming open enrollment

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Plans moving forward for transition to Swedish

Beginning in January 2016, many of our Seattle area HMO members who require hospital admission will get care at the Swedish Hospital First Hill and Cherry Hill campuses, rather than at Virginia Mason Hospital. It was approximately a year ago that Group Health Cooperative announced a new relationship with Swedish Health Services to provide hospital services to Seattle area members. Since then, plans have moved forward with teams at Swedish and Group Health working together on transition planning.

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Improved customer service expected with move to OptumRx

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Impact on mail order and specialty pharmacy.

Group Health will continue offering prescriptions through its popular mail order pharmacy. Most specialty drugs will be dispensed through Group Health pharmacies, and some through Brivoa, OptumRx's specialty pharmacy company. Group Health or Brivoa will contact members impacted by this change to ensure no disruption in their ability to get needed prescriptions.

Member cards. Affected members can expect new cards prior to Jan. 1, 2016. It will be critical for new and renewing groups to send in enrollment forms in a timely manner to ensure that member cards are mailed in time. We will make every effort to get new cards to these members by Jan. 1, and will keep you and our mutual clients abreast of any issues related to this.

Plans moving forward for transition to Swedish

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Obstetrical-delivery and Special Care Nursery services have already moved to Swedish. That transition occurred as planned in February. Group Health family medicine physicians, pediatricians, obstetricians, and midwives now deliver babies at the First Hill location. Most other hospital services for Group Health Core HMO members and Medicare Advantage HMO members will move to Swedish beginning the third week of January in 2016. At that time, Group Health specialists at our Seattle clinics will begin seeing hospitalized patients and providing services, including surgeries, at the Swedish First Hill and Cherry Hill facilities.

Swedish has also been busy preparing to care for Group Health patients by expanding some facilities and adding support staff. "The Swedish and Group Health teams have been working together for months, hammering out details of the transition," says Carol Taylor, RN, regional director of Hospital Systems and Integration for the Seattle region. "Everyone is committed to making sure that our patients continue to experience outstanding care."

Though we expect this transition to go smoothly, we know that some of your clients may have questions about how it affects them. Below are answers to frequently asked questions.

Q How are you letting affected members know about this change?

A We communicated with our members last year, and we recently sent out another letter to affected members. Our goal is to make this transition as seamless as possible for our members.

Q Will Group Health change the way it provides care when hospital services are moved to Swedish?

A Our doctors and other providers are bringing the same model of care to their work at Swedish First Hill and Cherry Hill. Members can expect the same patient-centered approach and quality health outcomes at Swedish.



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Plans moving forward for smooth transition to Swedish

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Q Will members with all health plans be affected in the same way by this transition?

A Different plans will be affected differently by this change.

- Our Core and Medicare Advantage HMO plans will have Swedish First Hill and Cherry Hill hospital locations in their network. Virginia Mason will no longer be included.
- Alliance HMO and Connect/Alliant Plus POS plans, for a select number of members and employer groups, will expand to include Swedish First Hill and Cherry Hill facilities. All of the providers in the current (2015) Alliance and Connect networks will remain the same, including those at Virginia Mason. Some members and employer groups may retain the expanded Alliance, Alliant Plus, and Connect networks through Dec. 31, 2017.
- Access PPO and Options PPO plans will not experience any change to their network as a result of this transition to Swedish. Both Swedish and Virginia Mason continue to be part of that network.

Q For the Alliance HMO and Connect/Alliant Plus members who choose to go to Virginia Mason, will they receive their inpatient hospital care from a Group Health provider?

A Group Health providers are in the process of transitioning to Swedish First Hill and Cherry Hill. But Alliance HMO and Connect/Alliant Plus members can also transition their care to these Swedish facilities. When they do this, they will benefit from the Group Health model of care.

Everyone is committed to making sure that our patients continue to experience outstanding care.

Carol Taylor, RN, Group Health regional director of Hospital Systems and Integration

Q What happens if a patient is mistakenly taken to Virginia Mason in the week or two after this transition takes place?

A We understand that this change may cause some confusion. You can trust Group Health to do what's in the best interest of our members.

Q If my clients have questions about this, what's the best way for them to get an answer?

A Our Customer Service department is prepared to answer member questions about this transition. Your clients can speak to a customer service representative by calling 206-901-4636.

Q Tell me again, why you're making this change?

A This is part of our continuing focus to deliver better and more affordable health care while providing the best experience for our members.

