

New Colorado EHB Benchmark Plan Expands Coverage for Obesity Treatment Services Beginning in 2017

Over the last 12 months, the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS) has spearheaded the advocacy efforts of the obesity community to persuade state health exchange programs to provide essential health benefit (EHB) coverage for obesity treatment services. These efforts recently resulted in the Colorado state health exchange selecting a new EHB benchmark plan for 2017 – one that expands coverage for obesity treatment.

This recent decision by the Colorado Division of Insurance followed a June 1 public stakeholder meeting to discuss the benchmark selection process and solicit public input and feedback. Prior to the meeting, the Division posted the policy documents and a side-by-side summary chart of the nine plans eligible for selection as the state's benchmark plan. At the stakeholder meeting and for a two-week period thereafter, stakeholders were asked for their comments and recommendations on the candidate plans.

Both during the stakeholder meeting and open public comment period, ASBP leaders joined with the ASMBS Colorado State Chapter, other Obesity Care Continuum (OCC) groups, and industry partners to push for the adoption of the state employee health plan as the new EHB benchmark plan for 2017. When this process was complete, obesity advocates were rewarded with their first victory in turning a "no coverage" state into a limited coverage state, as the exchange will now cover bariatric surgery in addition to Affordable Care Act-mandated intensive behavioral therapy services for obesity. The OCC is hopeful that the new round of FDA-approved obesity medications will be the next treatment avenue to be included once new state health exchange pharmacy and therapeutics committees are established in 2017.

In announcing the new EHB benchmark selection, the Colorado Division of Insurance listed obesity treatment services as the number one treatment area raised by stakeholders that was lacking in the state's current benchmark plan:

"While the selected 2012 benchmark plan, the Kaiser Ded/CO HMO 1200D plan, was the largest small group plan, the stakeholders who commented in this year's process identified stronger support for the Kaiser State Employee Plan because it offers benefits in three areas that are not in the current benchmark: obesity services (specifically bariatric surgery coverage), services provided by chiropractors, and some infertility coverage."

LINK TO JULY 1 COLORADO DIVISION OF INSURANCE MEMORANDUM:

<http://cdn.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite?blobcol=urldata&blobheadername1=Content-Disposition&blobheadername2=Content-Type&blobheadervalue1=inline;+filename=%22Memo+to+Stakeholders+-+2017+Benchmark+Selection+Recommendation.pdf%22&blobheadervalue2=application/pdf&blobkey=id&blobtable=MungoBlobs&blobwhere=1252062500243&ssbinary=true>

The Obesity Care Continuum is hopeful that this victory in Colorado will be the first of many as we work to secure nationwide patient access to and coverage of the full continuum of care for those affected by obesity.