

Article 5 of 5 in Our Cal MediConnect Series

The following is the fifth in a series of articles about Cal MediConnect that Hershey Cause Communications has developed for physicians, specialists and other health care providers serving in Los Angeles County.

How Cal MediConnect Care Management and Behavioral Health Coordination Support Physicians

While most physicians do an excellent job coordinating care for their dual eligible patients (those who qualify for both Medicare and Medi-Cal), this population—often the poorest and sickest among us—may need extra help connecting with multiple specialists and behavioral health services, as well as community-based resources.

Cal MediConnect is designed to address these challenges. Part of California’s Coordinated Care Initiative (CCI), Cal MediConnect provides the option for dual eligible patients to receive all of their benefits from one single, coordinated health plan. In Los Angeles County, there are five different health plans from which to choose: L.A. Care Health Plan, Health Net, Care1st Health Plan, CareMore and Molina. Physicians who treat patients enrolled in Cal MediConnect will gain the support of health plan Care Managers who will coordinate the full range of medical, pharmacy, long-term care, home and community-based and behavioral health services for their patients.

Integrating Behavioral Health Services

According to a 2012 Kaiser Family Foundation report, 34% of dual eligibles nationwide suffer from chronic behavioral health issues, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), along with other chronic medical conditions. Integrating behavioral health services with medical care for dual eligibles through case management can provide a wealth of information for physicians. Understanding a patient more completely enables a doctor to better manage and treat a patient’s chronic conditions. It also improves safety—having complete information available will allow a doctor to avoid prescribing contra-indicated medications, for example.

So, how does behavioral health integration work in the Cal MediConnect program? Cal MediConnect health plans are required to conduct a health risk assessment (HRA) upon enrollment. The assessment includes questions regarding mental health, such as whether the patient is currently receiving behavioral health treatment, recent hospitalizations, psychiatric medications, current mood and anxiety state, and overall mental health needs. The HRA is a unique service of coordinated care. It can provide physicians with valuable information about their patient’s mental health they likely would not otherwise receive, resulting in

How Cal MediConnect supports physicians of patients with behavioral health needs:

- Identify behavioral health or other issues through patient assessments
- Establish a care plan and care team with you and your patient to meet your patients’ needs
- Assist with coordination with County and other resources available in the community
- Help with coordination of the full range of medical and other services, including with other chronic conditions a patient may have

early identification of potential behavioral health issues and leading to earlier intervention and better patient outcomes.

Physicians also have the option of referring their patients to specialists that belong to a Cal MediConnect plan's provider network, after which the patient's Care Manager can follow up with the health plan member to facilitate the next steps.

Benefits of Care Coordination for Physicians

Care Managers who facilitate care coordination for Cal MediConnect patients can be an indispensable resource for physicians, saving them and their staff a significant amount of time and resources. Cal MediConnect Care Managers make it easier for physicians to treat the whole patient by increasing communication between a patient's physician and specialists to ensure the physician is aware of all medical, behavioral and other health needs, creating a more holistic—and effective—approach to health care.

To find out more about the program and how to participate, please visit www.calduals.org. You can also visit www.calmediconnectla.org or call 1-888-522-1298 for more information.