



Provider Bulletin

A **quarterly** publication for providers.



A call for action: Let's push further for healthy communities

When I reflect on this past year, I am struck by the significant and pervasive needs our members face every day in our communities. Whether it's securing housing or food or navigating complex health conditions, these obstacles often make it difficult for members to access the care they need, when and where they need it most.

It's a problem no one entity can solely fix.

Our trusted providers and community partners play a critical role in connecting members to the resources and tools that support them in being their healthiest selves. This includes referring our highest-need members to the Enhanced Care Management and Community Supports (ECM-CS) services available

to them. Or spreading the word about our Community Health Worker (CHW) benefit, which encourages community-based organizations to become credentialed to provide this valued benefit to members.

This is a great start! Yet...there is more work to do.

Our vision of *Healthy People, Healthy Communities* is audacious, so that's why I must humbly call on you to push further with us. Our members need access to more CHWs. The need for ECM-CS providers is growing, and we need you to refer more members to these services. Please take advantage of the resources and grant funding opportunities we have available for these programs. Learn more by visiting the Healthy Communities

Alliance Board Meetings

Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2024

3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2024

3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Physicians Advisory Group Meetings

Thursday, March 7, 2024

Noon to 1:30 p.m.

Whole Child Model Clinical Advisory Committee (WCMCAC) Meeting

Wednesday, Dec. 13, 2023

Noon to 1 p.m.



section of our website at www.thealliance.health/healthy-communities.

Lastly, I'd like to thank you for your continued commitment and support. I wish you peace, prosperity and health in the new year.

Michael Schrader
Michael Schrader, CEO

MY2022 HEDIS Award winners

The Alliance is pleased to announce our Measurement Year 2022 (MY2022) Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) Award winners!

HEDIS audits assess how well the Alliance network of providers is delivering services to its patients.

Awards are based on National Committee of Quality Assurance (NCQA) clinical measure guidelines.

Awards

- Providers without measures falling beneath the minimum performance level (MPL)* were granted the *Award of Excellence – Platinum*.

- Providers with one MPL, or whose performance was best among their peers, were granted the *Award of Excellence*.

*MPLs are based on the NCQA Medicaid 50th percentile benchmark.

Please join us in congratulating and applauding the following providers for their exceptional effort and achievements!


We also asked providers to share their strategies for success. Here's what they had to say.

Merced County

 **Newman Medical Clinic**
Award of Excellence




Monterey County

 **Laurel Pediatric Clinic**
Award of Excellence

What Laurel Pediatric Clinic shared about **childhood immunizations**:

“Laurel Pediatrics has always been an essential clinic for our community in Salinas. Staff and providers care for pediatric patients from all over the county, especially those with special needs. Our providers prioritize well-child visits for every single patient. Immunizing children is at the heart of preventive care and primary care. For many years, we have been proud of our ‘immunize at every opportunity’ approach. The patients put their trust in our providers, and together, we make the entire community healthier.”

 **George L. Mee Memorial Clinic – King City**
Award of Excellence


What the team shared about **adolescent immunizations**:

“During the pandemic, we implemented a multi-department team approach to HEDIS measures that combines front-office and back-office clinic staff with representatives from our IT, HIM, quality and billing departments. The outcome has been improved EMR templates, quality measure tip sheets, and ongoing education and training for staff and providers.

In our clinics, pre-visit planning starts with our patient care coordinators, who identify care gaps and schedule appointments. Then our back-office medical assistants review records and flag quality opportunities for patients on the provider schedules. The adolescent population can be a challenge, especially with the older teens, but our providers help educate patients and their parents on why wellness care and routine immunizations are so important.”

Santa Cruz County



 **Melissa Z. Lopez-Bermejo**
Award of Excellence

What Dr. Lopez-Bermejo shared about success with **mammogram rates**:


“We are consistent with our chart prepping. My staff reviews every appointment on my schedule and they scrub it to make sure we capture all we need to order when the patient is in the clinic. We also do a lot of follow-up reminder calls; if we see no results, we call the patient. If they call the clinic to schedule an appointment and we see there is pending testing, we take the opportunity to remind the patient.”

 **Alisal Health Center**
Award of Excellence

What Alisal Health Center shared about their work in **cervical cancer screening**:

“Many of our staff and providers have worked at the Alisal Health Center for years, and patients have come to think of us as part of their extended family. Before visits, staff prepare for closing all gaps in care, but the most important part of this collaboration happens when the patients interact in person with our staff and clinicians. The trust goes both ways and is deep.”



 **Salud at 64 Aspen Way**
Award of Excellence

What Salud shared about **lead screening in children**:

“Salud developed a system with our patients’ health and well-being in mind. Our reminder system utilizes our patient electronic health record software. Medical providers are reminded to order preventive services, such as lead screenings, if they are due. In addition, we have in-house, point-of-care lead testing available in our clinics. Our medical assistants check each patient’s ‘Health Reminders’ and test patients for lead during pediatric well-child visits. We believe this collaborative approach speaks to our staff’s teamwork at each site to ensure that Salud is meeting our patients’ health care needs.”

 **Salud Para La Gente**
Award of Excellence – Platinum

What Salud shared about their **overall high performance**:

“Salud continues to develop policies and systems with equity in mind as we strive for the best patient experience. Our mission at Salud is to ensure that everyone has access to affordable, high-quality, culturally competent health care, regardless of their ability to pay. Everyone at Salud plays a role in ensuring that patients have access to the care they need, and we embrace a patient-centered approach.

- Medical assistants remind providers to order preventive services if ‘Health Reminders’ suggest they are due and help schedule any needed testing.
- Care coordinators keep ‘Health Reminders’ updated. They call patients every month based on patient registries that identify patients due for preventive services.
- Health records staff help obtain previous records if patients had care elsewhere.
- Referral staff follow up on open referral orders.
- Patient service coordinators, patient access representatives and patient appointment coordinators keep our records updated so we know which patients are ours and who their primary care providers are.
- A population health analyst runs monthly patient registry lists and sets up text message campaigns to let Salud patients know when they are due for preventive services.”

2024 Care-Based Incentive program

The Alliance's Care-Based Incentive (CBI) program includes a set of measures that encourage preventive health services and connect Medi-Cal members with their primary care providers (PCPs). The program offers financial incentives and technical assistance to support providers in helping members self-manage their care and reduce proximal health care costs. The CBI program pays qualifying contracted provider sites, including family practice, pediatrics and internal medicine.

Provider incentives are broken into two categories:

- Programmatic measures that are paid annually based on rate of performance in each measure.
- Fee-for-service (FFS) measures that are paid quarterly when a specific service is performed or a measure is achieved.

New programmatic measures

Lead Screening in Children was moved from exploratory to a programmatic measure and is based on children 2 years of age who had one or more capillary or venous lead blood tests for lead poisoning by their second birthday.

New FFS measures

Diagnostic Accuracy and Completeness Training:

The plan will pay providers, including mid-level providers and second- and third-year residents, for completing the CMS Diagnostic Coding training course, "Using the ICD-10-CM." The course is available at www.thealliance.health/ICD10CM.

Cognitive Health Assessment Training and

Attestation: The plan will pay providers, including mid-level providers and second- and third-year residents, for completing the DHCS cognitive health assessment training and attestation.

Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) ICD-10

Z-Code Submission: The plan will pay clinics who submit DHCS priority SDOH Z-codes.

Quality Performance Improvement Projects:

The plan will pay clinics that participate in an Alliance-offered quality performance improvement project for metrics below the minimum performance level in 2023.

Measure changes

Initial Health Assessment has been changed to **Initial Health Appointment**.

Screening for Depression and Follow-up Plan has been changed to **Depression Screening for Adolescents and Adults**. This measure looks at the percentage of members 12 years of age and older who were screened for clinical depression using a standardized tool.

Health Equity Measure is a health plan performance measure based on child and well-care visits. Points will be awarded if well-child visit rates are improved for all ethnicities.

Retired measures

- **Body Mass Index (BMI) Assessment: Children & Adolescent.**
- **Immunizations: Adults.**

New exploratory measures

Well-Child Visits for Ages 15-30 Months: This measure looks at the percentage of members 30 months old who had two or more well-visits with a PCP during 15-30 months of life.

To learn more about the 2024 CBI program, visit www.thealliance.health/cbi2024workshop.





Best practices for immunotherapy preparation

Through the medical record review process, the Alliance has identified common deficiencies relating to documentation of allergen immunotherapy services. Deficiencies are specific to immunotherapy vial preparation services billed with CPT code 95144 [*Professional services for the supervision of preparation and provision of antigens for allergen immunotherapy, single dose vial(s) (specify number of vials)*].

To promote best practices for the documentation of CPT code 95144, the Alliance reminds providers of the following guidelines:

- Mixing logs require inclusion of the patient's name, extract used for mixing, mixing date, expiration date and corresponding lot numbers.
- Documentation must include the commercial extract used, including details on the expiration date, volume used, lot number and concentration. Documented patient history must indicate the need for each specific vial.

To ensure that documentation and administration meet industry standards, providers are encouraged to review the Allergen Immunotherapy Extract Preparation Manual at www.thealliance.health/AIEPManual. Proper record-keeping of services rendered is essential for provider reimbursement, as well as for guaranteeing the best care for Alliance members!

Medi-Cal supplies policy reminder for HCPCS code Z7610

Effective for dates of service on or after July 1, 2023, claims for any covered HCPCS code medical supply benefit using an erroneous HCPCS code other than defined in the appropriate sections of the Medi-Cal provider manual will no longer be reimbursed.

Products that are covered by Medi-Cal should be billed using the appropriate HCPCS Level II codes. HCPCS code Z7610, although billable under certain situations, is NOT billable as a pharmacy outpatient benefit.

Refer to the Medical Supplies (mc sup) section of the Medi-Cal provider manual at www.thealliance.health/CoveredMedicalSupplies and the list of Medical Supplies Billing Codes, Units and Quantity Limits at www.thealliance.health/SuppliesBillingCodes.



Nurse Advice Line

The Alliance Nurse Advice Line is available 24/7 for members by calling **844-971-8907**. It is an important resource for reducing avoidable emergency room visits. Members can speak to a registered nurse and discuss treatment options, such as home care, follow-up with their provider or referral to the emergency room, as appropriate.


From Jan. 1, 2023 through Aug. 31, 2023, the Nurse Advice Line received about 961 calls each month. Of those, around 47% were referred to their provider, 20% resulted in self-management, and only 12% were recommended to go to the emergency department or call 911.

Top five call reasons:

- Head or face (headache, sinus pain, head trauma, etc.).
- Medical question.
- General pain.
- Skin-related concern.
- Colon health.

It is best practice to include the Nurse Advice Line in your clinic voicemail and as an option on the clinic phone tree for members to select and be directed to a registered nurse.

Member incentive

 Alliance members can win a **\$50 Target gift card** for calling the Nurse Advice Line. If members provide their ID number when they call, they will be entered into a monthly raffle.



Alliance member workshops

The Alliance offers a variety of health education programs, including workshops for members. There is no cost for Alliance members to participate in the workshops. All member workshops are available in English or Spanish.

Live Better with Diabetes program workshops—this program is available for adult members living with diabetes.

The workshops are offered in three different modalities:

- Over the phone.
- Virtually with online meetings.
- In person.

Healthier Living Program workshops—this program is available for adult members living with chronic condition(s) like asthma, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and depression.

The workshops are offered in three different modalities:

- Over the phone.
- Virtually with online meetings.
- In person.



Alliance members who complete all six classes can receive a **\$50 Target gift card**.

Healthy Weight for Life program workshops—this program is available for parents or guardians of Alliance members ages 2 to 18. This program provides families with tools to help children reach a healthy weight and make healthier lifestyle changes.

The workshops are offered in two different modalities:

- Virtually with online meetings.
- In person.



Alliance members who complete all 10 classes can receive a **\$100 Target gift card**. Members can also be entered in a raffle to win a bike.

Providers can refer members to health education programs by completing the Health Programs Referral Form found on the Alliance website: **www.thealliance.health/hp-referral**.

To learn more about our health education programs, please call the **Alliance Health Education Line** at **800-700-3874, ext. 5580**.

Pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV is an effective prevention strategy. An HIV-negative individual can take a daily medication containing two antiretroviral agents (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate and emtricitabine, brand-name Truvada) to remain HIV-negative. Taken daily, it reduces the risk of HIV infection by over 90% and is covered by Medi-Cal.

Priority populations to consider for PrEP include gay, bisexual or other men who have sex with men; transgender women; people who inject drugs; and partners of HIV-positive people. Special emphasis is placed on young gay and bisexual men, young transgender women and transgender women of color.

The medication is safe and well-tolerated, but it does not replace

other HIV prevention methods, including condoms.

All providers who accept Medi-Cal are eligible to join the PrEP Assistance Program clinical provider network, which reimburses for PrEP-related medical services. To join the network, email PrEPSupport@cdph.ca.gov.

PrEP can be effectively integrated into any primary care practice. Experience treating HIV infection is not necessary to prescribe PrEP. Clinicians interested in incorporating PrEP into their practice have access to a range of no-cost training services provided by California-based organizations, including online provider toolkits, academic detailing and a clinician consultation hotline. The California Department of Public Health recommends that all primary care providers provide routine opt-out HIV testing

and discuss prevention options, including PrEP. A brief sexual and drug use history is indicated to understand if a patient will benefit from PrEP. Indicating that your practice offers or refers for PrEP with brochures and other information can facilitate these conversations in a busy primary care practice.

Resources:

PrEP Assistance Program: www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DOA/Pages/OA_adap_resources_prepAP.aspx.

Pacific AIDS Education & Training Center: www.paetc.org.

PrEP Provider Toolkit with clinical guidelines: www.paetc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/PrEP-Clinical-Guidelines.pdf.

UCSF Clinical Consultation Center: www.nccc.ucsf.edu/clinician-consultation.

PrEP Academic Detailing: www.paetc.org/our-programs/prep-academic-detailing.





New additions launched for Enhanced Care Management and Community Supports

Enhanced Care Management (ECM) provides a whole-person approach to care that addresses the clinical and non-clinical circumstances of high-need Medi-Cal managed care members. Community Supports (CS) are services or settings designed to address health-related social needs of members.

ECM services continue for previous populations of focus, with additional active populations of focus including children and youth as of July 2023. More

populations of focus will launch Jan. 1, 2024, which is also when ECM/CS services will become available in Mariposa and San Benito counties.

Two new populations of focus

1. Birth equity (Black, American Indian and Alaska Native, and Pacific Islander pregnant and postpartum individuals).
2. Adults and youth transitioning from incarceration (post-release services only).

Referring members to ECM/CS services

Community-based organizations are in a unique position to identify Alliance members' needs. The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) emphasizes how important it is for managed care plans like the Alliance to source most ECM/CS referrals from community providers like you!

As part of California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal, ECM/CS services coordinate all aspects of care for the highest-need Medi-Cal members and serve as cost-effective alternatives to covered Medi-Cal services.

Providers or requesting entities may refer members to ECM and CS services using one of the following methods:

Provider Portal referral. Registered providers can log in to the Alliance Provider Portal to submit, inquire about, cancel or add information to existing referrals at provider.portal.ccah-alliance.org.

Online referral on our website. All community entities can submit referrals for ECM or CS by completing the appropriate form. The following list of forms can be found on the Alliance's ECM/CS referrals page at www.thealliance.health/ecm-cs-referrals.

ECM referrals:

- Adult ECM Provider Referral Form (age 21 and over).
- Youth ECM Provider Referral Form (age 20 and under).

CS referrals:

- Housing.
- Environmental Accessibility and Adaptability.
- Meals.
- Personal Care and Home Maker Services and Respite Services for Caregivers.

Phone. Refer a member to ECM/CS services by calling **831-430-5512**.

Submit a Treatment Authorization Request (TAR) form. Submit a TAR form to request services and attach appropriate documentation. TAR forms are available at www.thealliance.health/treatment-authorization-request and may be submitted via email or fax.

- Email to listecmteam@ccah-alliance.org.
- Fax to **831-430-5819**.

Effective Jan. 1, 2024, the Alliance will be a local ally in providing trusted, no-cost Medi-Cal health care to approximately 28,000 new members in Mariposa and San Benito counties. We are actively recruiting providers in the area to join our network. For more information, please visit www.thealliance.health/join-our-network.

American Sign Language interpretation services

The Alliance offers interpreter services for members with limited English proficiency or who are deaf or hard of hearing. All services are free of charge to providers and members.

The Alliance offers face-to-face or in-person interpreter services for members in need of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters. To request ASL interpreting services for members, providers must complete the Face-to-Face Interpreter Request Form found on the Alliance Cultural and Linguistic services webpage, www.thealliance.health/interpreter-request-form.

Submit it by fax to **831-430-5850** within 7-10 business days prior to the member's appointment.

To learn more about the Alliance language assistance services, please call the Health Education Line at **800-700-3874, ext. 5580**.



Choosing the right drug for the right patient: Treating insomnia

Cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I) is a first-line treatment for chronic insomnia. It is also recommended for pregnant and breastfeeding women.

Over-the-counter medications like diphenhydramine, melatonin, valerian root and the prescription drug trazodone may be helpful for short-term use, but they are not recommended for chronic insomnia.

The commonly used drugs for the treatment of chronic insomnia are non-benzodiazepine benzodiazepine receptor agonists (NBBRAs), such as zolpidem, zaleplon and eszopiclone).

It's important to note that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has lowered the starting dose of zolpidem immediate release to 5mg and zolpidem ER to 6.25mg for females. Benzodiazepines and NBBRAs are an appropriate choice for a patient with comorbid insomnia and anxiety or depression, while an atypical antipsychotic might be indicated for a patient with comorbid insomnia and schizophrenia. Benzodiazepine receptor agonists (BzRAs) and NBBRAs are not recommended for patients with substance use disorder. Dual orexin receptor antagonists (DORAs), such as suvorexant, lemborexant and daridorexant, can be a good choice for patients with substance use disorder.

Trazodone, doxepin and DORAs tend to be associated with slight

reduction in blood pressure and may be a good choice for patients with hypertension. Doxepin, ramelteon and DORAs appear to be a viable choice for older adults.

Here is a guide (see chart below) based on patient presentation of type of insomnia and a summary of possible treatment options.



| | Sleep onset insomnia (problems falling asleep) | Sleep maintenance insomnia (waking up during the night) |
|-------------|---|--|
| Doxepin | | ✓ |
| Eszopiclone | ✓ | ✓ |
| Ramelteon | ✓ | |
| Suvorexant | | ✓ |
| Triazolam | ✓ | |
| Temazepam | ✓ | ✓ |
| Zaleplon | ✓ | |
| Zolpidem | ✓ | ✓ |

References:

- Rosenberg RP, Benca R, Doghramji P, et al. A 2023 update on managing insomnia in primary care: insights from an expert consensus group. *Prim Care Companion CNS Disord.* 2023;25(1):22nr03385.
- Sateia MJ, Buysse DJ, Krystal AD, et al. Clinical practice guideline for the pharmacologic treatment of chronic insomnia in adults: an American Academy of Sleep Medicine clinical practice guideline. *J Clin Sleep Med.* 2017;13(2):307–349.



Improve patient care outcomes: Sign up for pharmacist-led academic detailing

The Alliance’s Pharmacy Department offers interactive 45-minute virtual sessions on asthma and diabetes. Clinicians who sign up will work with an Alliance pharmacist to discuss and collaborate on topics such as:

- Treatment guidelines by the Global Initiative for Asthma and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute specific to the asthma session.
- The American Diabetes Association’s 2023 Standard of Care in Diabetes specific to the diabetes session.
- Clinical pearls and strategies to optimize patient outcomes through evidence-based medication management.

Enroll and work in partnership with an Alliance pharmacist to receive information on the latest clinical guidelines, discuss areas for improvement in members with these conditions and discuss best practices in medication management.

Sign up today!

To learn more about the program and sign up, please email Pharmacy@ccah-alliance.org. Include the phrase “Pharmacist-Led Academic Detailing” in the subject line.

Stay tuned for pharmacist-led academic detailing on the topic of hypertension.

Medi-Cal Rx Drug Utilization Review articles

Please review the following Medi-Cal Rx Drug Utilization Review articles published since May 2023.

Topics include:

1. Clinical Review: Management of Acute Postpartum Pain.
2. Updated Guidance by CDC and FDA for Prescribing Opioids.
3. FDA Approves First Over-the-Counter Naloxone Nasal Spray.
4. New Resources Available for Perinatal Mental Health Conditions.
5. No Added Benefit from Concomitant Use of GLP-1 Agonists and DPP-4 Inhibitors.

These resources are linked on the Alliance’s pharmacy services webpage under the “Drug Utilization Review (DUR)” section:

www.thealliance.health/pharmacy-services.

Important phone numbers

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Provider Services | 831-430-5504 |
| Claims. | 831-430-5503 |
| Authorizations | 831-430-5506 |
| Status (non-pharmacy) | 831-430-5511 |
| Member Services. | 831-430-5505 |
| Web and EDI | 831-430-5510 |
| Cultural & Linguistic Services. | 831-430-5580 |
| Health Education Line. | 831-430-5580 |

Partnering with local doctors and specialists
to ensure that Alliance members get access
to the right care, at the right time.



Standard
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Welcome, new providers



Merced County

Primary Care

- Raymon Birring, MD, Family Medicine

ECM/CS Providers

- Coastal Kids Home Care, ECM/CS (Monterey and Santa Cruz counties)
- Love Focus, ECM/CS (Merced County)
- Roots Food Group, CS (Servicing all counties)
- Sierra Vista, ECM (Merced County)

Monterey County

Primary Care

- Cristian Carrillo, DO, Family Medicine
- Adelheid Ebenhoech, MD, Family Medicine
- Alfred Forrest, MD, Gynecology
- Allyson Garcia, MD, Pediatrics
- Malavvika Kulashekar, DO, Family Medicine
- Ivan Marquez, MD, Pediatrics
- Stephen Owens, MD, Family Medicine
- Catherine Petronijevic, DO, Family Medicine
- Steven Petronijevic, DO, Family Medicine
- Nitikul Solomon, MD, Pediatrics

Referral Physician/Specialist

- Ankit Agarwal, MD, Radiation Therapy
- Antonette Ajayi, MD, Pulmonary Disease
- Rami Alrezk, MD, Endocrinology Diabetes and Metabolism (San Luis Obispo)
- Catherine Biren, MD, Dermatology

- Stella Bulengo, MD, Dermatology
- Ernest Dytiapco, MD, Nephrology (San Luis Obispo)
- Ian Fauconier, MD, Urology
- Katrina Fischer, MD, Hematology
- Steve Hu, MD, Gastroenterology
- Rikin Kadakia, MD, Cardiovascular Disease
- Steven Kurtzman, MD, Radiation Therapy
- Varun Patibanda, MD, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
- Jon Soble, MD, Urology
- Jaya Prakash Sungunraj, MD, Pulmonary Disease
- Scott Wada, MD, Obstetrics and Gynecology
- Roshini Yapa, MD, Nephrology

Santa Cruz County

Primary Care

- Jacob Ginsburg, DO, Family Medicine
- Danielle Harik, DO, Family Medicine

Referral Physician/Specialist

- Charlotte Lynn Alexander, MD, Obstetrics and Gynecology

Holiday office closures

- Dec. 22, 2023 (Christmas Eve observed)
- Dec. 25, 2023 (Christmas Day)
- Jan. 1, 2024 (New Year's Day)
- Jan. 15, 2024 (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)
- Feb. 19, 2024 (Presidents Day)