



Testimony

House Finance Health and Human Services Subcommittee

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Paramount Health Care
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Chairman Roemer, Ranking Member West and members of the House Finance Health and Human Services Subcommittee, I am Lori Johnston, Chief Executive Officer for Paramount's Medicaid health plan, Paramount Advantage. I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding the partnership that Paramount Health Care has with the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) and our commitment to serving Medicaid individuals in Ohio. I would also like to highlight how the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated that health plans, such as Paramount Advantage, adapt and create programs and services to meet the needs of vulnerable Ohioans.

Paramount Advantage is unique in that we are the only Ohio Medicaid managed care plan that is also part of a not-for-profit integrated health and wellness organization. As a wholly-owned entity of ProMedica, Paramount Advantage has a health care delivery model that incorporates both the delivery of health care services and health insurance. ProMedica and Paramount work collaboratively to set and achieve goals that drive efficiencies, optimize health outcomes, and reduce cost. Paramount Advantage is proud to:

- Have been a partner in Ohio's Medicaid Managed Care Program since 1993, consistently retaining some of the highest overall member satisfaction ratings in Ohio since 1995.
- Maintain continuous accreditation from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) – since 2000.
- Be ranked as the top Medicaid health plan in Ohio for 2019 and 2020 by NCQA.
- Earn the following overall ODM pay-for-performance rankings:
 - No. 1 for years 2013, 2014 and 2016
 - No. 2 for years 2015, 2017 and 2018
- Earn the highest overall withhold scores across all four indices for SFY 2019 – CY 2018.
- Be tied for #1 overall ranking of all Ohio Medicaid plans on the 2019 and 2020 ODM MCP Report Card, with a total of 16 stars across all domains, and as the only plan to earn a 5 star rating in the Women's Health domain in 2019.
- Employ 869 FTEs with headquarters in Maumee and satellite offices in Columbus, Cleveland and Cincinnati.

The COVID-19 pandemic has required a collaborative effort among all Ohio Medicaid managed care organizations and ODM to meet the needs of the Medicaid individuals and the communities we serve. Below is a summary of activities, new and revised programs and services that Paramount Advantage has been engaged in and has implemented since the onset of COVID-19.

Quality Withhold

In 2020, ODM changed the Quality withhold performance metrics linking them to COVID-19 activities aimed at reducing the impact of the coronavirus on the most vulnerable Ohioans. This required a collaborative effort among all five Ohio MCOs and ODM. Ninety-five percent of each plan's withhold score is based on the joint efforts of the MCOs and 5 percent of each plan's score is based on support and compliance with the emergency regulations in the ODM provider agreement.

The five key areas of focus included the initiatives listed below. Teams were led by CEOs from each of the Ohio MCOs. I chaired the Childhood Immunization Team.

Restored Citizens (25%)

- Goal: To decrease the incidence of COVID-19 infections for newly released prisoners in the first 30 days

Congregate Settings NF/ALFs (25%)

- Goal: To assist facilities with preparedness and aftercare to decrease the spread of COVID-19 in facilities

Transportation (15%)

- Goal: To improve access and safety of transportation for members

Childhood Immunizations (15%)

- Goal: To increase the immunization rates despite potential reduction in office visits

Provider Support (15%)

- Goal: To assist providers with support for telehealth – education, billing, technology assistance

Community Outreach

ProMedica is focused on being a national leader in thoughtfully addressing the social determinants of health (SDOH). Twenty percent of health and well-being is related to access to care and quality of services. While 40 percent is related to socioeconomic factors, 10 percent to physical environment and 30 percent to health behaviors.

Through the variety of community partnerships that Paramount Advantage has forged over the years, SDOH needs and resources have become a focus. To address these needs, Paramount Advantage provides financial support to more than 200 community organizations each year with a focus on preventive care/wellness, food insecurity/nutrition, education/literacy, and higher education opportunities. More recently, COVID-related activities have required a tremendous amount of attention and repurposing of support funds.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, many of our partner organizations had to cancel services, events and fundraisers and turn their focus to community needs related to COVID-19.

- The Paramount Advantage team jumped into action to repurpose sponsorship funds. Since the pandemic began in March, Paramount staff have built and distributed more than 16,000 COVID supply kits to community organizations statewide, as well as to our Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) provider partners. The kits contain masks, latex gloves, hand sanitizer, alcohol wipes and bar soap.
- Funds have been redirected to support food and hygiene product distribution for more than 160 organizations, such as the St. Vincent Homeless Shelter in Montgomery County, Idea Connections in Cuyahoga County, and the Toledo Buffalo Soldiers Motor Cycle Club assisting low-income residents of the Lucas County Metropolitan Housing Authority.
- Funding was donated to cover the cost of 10,000 COVID-19 tests at Toledo area schools for employees and students regardless of Paramount enrollment status.
- Paramount Advantage has also purchased and distributed more than 40 UV sanitizers to nursing facilities across the state to assist in sanitizing staff and resident cell phones, tablets and laptops.
- An additional 5,300 hand sanitizers and 20,000 KN95 masks donated by ProMedica were distributed to our FQHC provider partners.
- We partnered with Cedar Creek Church on food and hygiene product deliveries for quarantined members.
- We assisted in delivering COVID vaccines.

Telehealth

Paramount supported the use of expanded telehealth well before the pandemic. We had started a Medicaid pilot project in northwest Ohio in 2018. When the pandemic hit, Paramount Advantage immediately created a multidisciplinary COVID-19 Task Force consisting of representatives from its Provider Relations, Provider Contracting, Provider Pricing, Benefit Configuration, Claims, Medical Policy, Senior Management, and Compliance departments. Team meetings were held to review ODM requirements around telemedicine and make decisions regarding implementation of these requirements. System changes were implemented accordingly by appropriate monitoring of claims and prompt communication to providers, members and staff. Medical and reimbursement policies were updated to support the Emergency Telehealth OAC rule. Claim system updates were in place on 04/13/2020 and retroactive to 03/09/2020 that allowed for health care providers to deliver services through this important mechanism. Paramount has also paid the highest non-facility rate for these services to support providers and their ability to stand up telehealth and ensure member access. The COVID-19 Task Force continues to meet weekly and will through the duration of the emergency period, in order to address ODM requirement changes and to respond to member, provider, and stakeholder feedback.

A resource guide was collaboratively developed by the five MCOs and a unified Telehealth Policy was posted to Paramount Advantage’s website. In addition, Paramount Advantage conducted televox robo calls to members to encourage utilization of telehealth and completion of immunizations. “Tips for a Telehealth Visit with your Doctor” was posted to the Paramount Advantage website in December 2020.

Care Coordination

The Paramount Care Management team has provided telephone outreach to high-risk Paramount Advantage members since the onset of the pandemic. Communications primarily focus on education related to COVID-19

prevention, new policies to reduce barriers to their health care, e.g., access to health care, adequate food supplies, early refills, increased transportation benefits and what to do if they believe they are ill with COVID- 19. As our Care Managers engage members and identify prevention needs, COVID-19 supply kits are mailed directly to the member's home.

Transportation

To address member needs during the pandemic, Paramount expanded the non-emergency transportation benefit in addition to trips to food banks/food clinics/food pantries already provided pre-COVID. Some of the changes that were made to assist Medicaid recipients include added grocery pick-up and delivery and automatic trip extensions.

Family Advisory Councils

Paramount Advantage holds quarterly in-person Family Advisory Council (FAC) meetings in each region that it serves to solicit feedback from members on how to improve programs and services. When the pandemic hit, Paramount Advantage had to quickly pivot to a virtual meeting format. Quarterly FAC meetings that were previously held face-to-face before COVID were transitioned to conference calls. The following specific changes were implemented for meetings:

- Paramount Advantage members who had volunteered to participate in the FAC were provided with education and information to set up and operate a conference call.
- Members were given direct contact information for several Paramount staff members in case they had questions before or during a meeting.
- Handouts and materials that were typically provided during in person meetings were mailed to members in advance.
- Any documents requiring return mail to Paramount Advantage (e.g. signature page for confidentiality agreement) included instructions on how to return through a pre-addressed envelope, fax, or electronically.

Paramount Advantage FAC meetings with members have been successful since transitioning to conference calls. Participation rates have remained consistent since converting to conference calls. In one instance, when a member was not able to participate in the meeting for his region, he was able to join the meeting for another region because it was conducted via conference call. This would not have been possible if the meetings were held in person. Additionally, in past years we had at least two members drop out of our participation by the end of the year, however, during the 2020 pandemic we had 100% retention of members engaged in the Paramount FAC quarterly virtual meetings.

Bengals/Browns Healthy Rewards Programs Virtual Prizing

Paramount Advantage partners with the Cleveland Browns and Cincinnati Bengals to encourage and incentivize our members to have annual well visits. Members that complete their well visits can register to be placed in a drawing for great prizes such as game tickets, field day events, suite experiences, team merchandise, etc. Due to

the pandemic, the prizing strategy had to be adjusted in 2020 to strictly offer team merchandise and a virtual prize. The virtual prize allowed winning members to interact with Browns/Bengals players and staff and included health care and football trivia questions. Technical training was provided to assist with participation, as well as small prizes for winning members and their families. The virtual prize was such a success that it will continue to be part of the prizing offerings even post-COVID-19.

Vaccine Outreach Efforts

As the vaccine became available, our Chief Medical Officer formed a COVID vaccine implementation team within Paramount. We wanted to ensure that appropriate focus and resources were allocated to this task. Paramount began vaccine outreach to Medicaid members 75 and older and those with severe congenital conditions on 1/26/21 and has continued to expand outreach to prioritized Ohio populations. Outreach staff include those on the Behavioral Health, Care Management, Disease Management and Member Services teams. Three phone call attempts are being made to educate on the vaccine/cost/transportation/etc., dispel any myths, encourage members to get the vaccine and assist with locating and scheduling an appointment as needed.

Paramount's website is continually being updated with the latest vaccine information. Paramount is working collaboratively with the other Medicaid managed care plans to ensure that vaccination sites near our members are identified and communicated. Vaccine social media messages, on hold messages and post cards have also been developed and approved by ODM. Data is being collected and the ODM report is being updated weekly. Additionally, pharmacy and medical claims are being monitored for vaccine administration.

Paramount/ProMedica Integration Efforts

As a division of a national health system, ProMedica, Paramount Advantage has the unique opportunity to combine health plan and healthcare experience for optimal member communication and care. At the onset of COVID, ProMedica instituted its Incident Command System (ICS) to standardize the system's emergency response. Paramount Advantage's chief medical officer (CMO) and chief operating officer (COO) participated in ProMedica's ICS and received daily feedback on provider access issues.

Together, ProMedica and Paramount are addressing social determinants on a number of fronts and will continue to do so post-pandemic. In 2015, ProMedica opened the Ebeid Institute in an area of downtown Toledo which was designated as a food desert. ProMedica's Ebeid Institute includes a full service grocery store (Market on the Green) that offers affordable and nutritious food, as well as a mobile market. Financial literacy classes, cooking and nutrition classes, job training and employment opportunities are also available through the Institute.

ProMedica is a founding partner of the Root Cause Coalition. Established in 2015, the Root Cause Coalition is a non-profit, member-driven organization comprised of more than 75 leading health systems, hospital associations, foundations, businesses, national and community nonprofits, health insurers, academic institutions and policy centers. The Coalition works to achieve health equity through cross-sector collaboration in advocacy, education and research. Although the Coalition focuses on SDOH on a national level, Paramount Advantage is bringing it to the local level by sponsoring and providing financial support for Root Cause Coalition memberships for 20 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) across Ohio for the next two years. This is being done in part because

of the impact of COVID on the needs of citizens across the state of Ohio and to be able to enable best practice sharing.

Paramount Advantage is a committed partner and is privileged to be part of the improvements being made to improve the health and enhance the lives of thousands of Ohioans, especially during these challenging times. We are confident that we will continue to fulfill our mission to improve the health and well-being of our members.

Thank you for this opportunity and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.