



Choose the Right Hospital

A TOOLKIT TO FACILITATE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION



What Else Can Employers Do?

In addition to educating employees about the importance of seeking out reliable information on hospital quality, as an employer you have several other strategies you can try to improve the likelihood that your employees will receive good care. These strategies are listed below.

Plan Design

Consider designing your benefits so that employees who seek care at high-performance hospitals (i.e. those with a demonstrated record in safety and quality) have a lower cost-sharing requirement than those who seek care at a non-designated hospital. For example, Boeing offers a tiered network for hospitals. When a Boeing employee needs hospital care, he or she may choose to use a hospital that is compliant with the Leapfrog Group standards. Leapfrog is an independent consortium of employers and other purchasing organizations that rate hospitals on whether they are compliant with a range of hospital quality and safety practices. If the employee uses a Leapfrog-compliant hospital, all costs after the deductible will be covered. If they use a non-compliant hospital, the employee must pay 5% of the allowed charges.¹

Work With Your Health Plans

Ask your health plans to demonstrate their commitment to hospital safety and quality by doing the following:

- ❖ **Developing “never event” payment policies, if not already developed:** These policies would state that for the most egregious medical errors, the health plan would not provide any payment to the hospital. Similar to what the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has developed for the Medicare program, the payment policies send the message that payment should not be made when the care provided is substandard.
- ❖ **Designating high-performance or centers of excellence networks:** For example, Blue Distinction® is a designation awarded by the Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies to medical facilities that have demonstrated expertise in delivering quality health care. The designation is based on rigorous, evidence-based, objective selection criteria established in collaboration with recommendations made by expert physicians and medical organizations. The goal of using such a designation is to help consumers find quality specialty care on a consistent basis while enabling and encouraging health care professionals to improve the overall quality and delivery of care nationwide.
- ❖ **Providing information on health plan websites about provider quality:** Given that health plans are often viewed as a resource for health information, it is essential that your health plans have this information readily available to its members. The more resources available to consumers, the greater the likelihood that they will see and use the information.

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¹ Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Consumer Financial Incentives, November 2007.



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Work With Providers Directly

Consider outreach to providers in your communities to engage them in becoming a preferred hospital. Encourage them to demonstrate a commitment to patient safety/quality care by participating in safety improvement programs such as the Surgical Care Improvement Project (SCIP) and instituting policies and practices that encourage quality and safety in all of their practices. In addition, hospitals should work to collect and disseminate information on their hospitals' performance, either through participation in efforts such as the annual Leapfrog Hospital Quality and Safety Survey or by posting standardized performance information on their own websites.

Identify Employees on Hospital Boards

Another way that you can promote patient safety and quality is by working within your workforce to push for change. Employees within your organization may already sit on local hospital boards; therefore, they are well positioned to advocate for a focus on patient safety and quality. By identifying employees who sit on these boards and then educating them about the importance of safety and quality, you can help make hospitals more accountable for their actions and further ensure the safety of their patients.