What Are Healthy Opportunities Pilots?

As a part of North Carolina’s transition to NC Medicaid Managed Care, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) received authority from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to conduct the Healthy Opportunities Pilot Program.

The Pilots create a unique opportunity to test the impact on health outcomes and health care costs by using Medicaid funds to pay for non-medical services specifically related to food, housing, transportation, interpersonal safety and toxic stress. Additionally, the Pilots will provide a mechanism for payers, providers and human service organizations (HSOs, e.g., community-based organizations or social service agencies) to have the tools, infrastructure and financing to integrate non-medical services into the delivery of health care for eligible Medicaid members.

The goals of the Pilot program are to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of select, evidence-based, non-medical interventions and the role of the Healthy Opportunities Network Lead (formerly known as the Lead Pilot Entity, or LPE) in improving health outcomes and reducing health care costs for high-risk NC Medicaid Managed Care members.
- Leverage evaluation findings to embed cost-effective interventions that improve health outcomes into the Medicaid program statewide, furthering NCDHHS’ goals for a sustainable Medicaid program; and
- Support the sustainability of delivering non-medical services identified as effective through the evaluation, including by strengthening the capabilities of HSOs and partnerships with health care payers and providers.

What Are Healthy Opportunities Network Leads and What Is Their Role?

Healthy Opportunities Network Leads are organizations embedded in their communities that will help the Department implement the Healthy Opportunities Pilots. Network Leads will connect the health care and social service sectors. Their key responsibilities include:

- Establish, manage and oversee a network of HSOs, including assessing HSO performance.
- Ensure an adequate network of HSOs to meet Medicaid members’ needs through the Pilots and ensure HSOs are delivering high-quality Pilot services.
- Distribute capacity-building funding to HSOs.
- Assist HSOs with invoicing for Pilot services and routing invoices to a member’s PHP for adjudication and payment.
- Provide technical assistance and conducting quality improvement activities with its HSO network.
- Facilitate learning collaboratives for HSOs, PHPs and care management entities participating in the Pilot.
- Collect and submit data to support DHHS’ evaluation and oversight of the Pilot program.
WHAT REGIONS ARE COVERED BY THE HEALTHY OPPORTUNITIES PILOTS?

The Department conducted a competitive selection process to solicit Healthy Opportunities Network Leads and their regional networks. The following regions were awarded on May 27, 2021.

Access East, Inc.: Beaufort, Bertie, Chowan, Edgecombe, Halifax, Hertford, Martin, Northampton, Pitt

Community Care of the Lower Cape Fear: Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, New Hanover, Onslow, Pender

Impact Health/Dogwood Health Trust: Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Yancey

The Network Lead may adjust its region within 45 days of award, subject to Department approval. If a Network Lead covers a county, all parts of that county must be covered.

WHAT SERVICES WILL BE OFFERED THROUGH THE PILOTS AND HOW WILL THEY BE REIMBURSED?

The Department defined a set of 29 services to offer through the Pilots in the Department’s four priority domains: food, housing, transportation, interpersonal safety and toxic stress. The Department will use three types of reimbursement for pilot services: fee-for-service, per-member-per-month (PMPM) payments and cost-based reimbursement up to a cap.

Services are listed below along with their unit of service and rate/cap. Payment for these services will increasingly be linked to health outcomes and costs over the course of the Pilot. Detailed definitions for each service and their rate/cap are available on our website under Pilot Services Fee Schedule.