How Medicaid Agencies are Engaging Their Members

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The National Association of Medicaid Directors (NAMD) surveyed its 56 Medicaid Directors in December 2020 to understand the variety of ways state Medicaid agencies are engaging their Medicaid members, particularly during the public health emergency (PHE).

From NAMD’s survey, five common themes emerged across the states:

1. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, states have changed their member engagement strategies, with more than three-quarters of state respondents planning to continue these new strategies after the pandemic. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, states transitioned their in-person member meetings to be virtual, began publishing more information on their websites and social media platforms, and engaged members with individual outreach. When it is safe to return to in-person events, more than three-quarters of state respondents are planning to continue their social media presence to augment and amplify the impact of their in-person member engagements.

2. While states utilize their federally mandated Medical Care Advisory Committees (MCAC) for member insights, a majority of states are seeking member feedback through additional sources. Over half of state responders found their MCACs to be very effective or effective. Some reasons given for successful MCACs include having dedicated staff members responsible for the MCAC, undertaking significant sub-committee work, and maintaining geographically, culturally, and racially diverse membership of the committee. Almost three-quarters of responders noted that MCACs are but one element of their member engagement efforts, and said they are seeking member perspectives beyond their required MCACs.

3. States are exploring new, innovative ways to connect with their members. States are using a variety of methods to engage with their members including member advisory committees, utilizing member videos and surveys, and holding regional stakeholder trainings and discussion sessions alongside public comment periods. States are also exploring innovative solutions such as using data from member calls and emails, incentivizing members to tell their success stories, and creating composition and diversity requirements for composition of member focused advisory boards.

4. States use a variety of staff configurations and Managed Care Organization (MCO) requirements to promote member engagement strategies. State respondents primarily share responsibility for soliciting member perspective across their staff, with a minority of respondents indicating that they have dedicated staff for member engagement. Many managed care states rely on their MCOs to engage in these efforts, with over half of the states who responded noting that they have contractual requirement for their MCOs to engage with members. These requirements ranged from requiring plans to survey their members to having a member advisory council or having members on their board or governing bodies.

5. States are still building out their social media strategies to engage with members. Almost half of the states who responded have a social media strategy unique to the Medicaid Agency, while the rest of the states either have broader health department strategies or don’t have any specific social
media strategy. Those who have been successful in using social media for member engagement cite predictability, easy access, and a hyper-informative approach as effective strategies.

As we look ahead, we expect Medicaid to continue to develop new innovative ways to connect with their members, building upon new technologies and strategies developed during the COVID-19 pandemic.