

Strategy 24

Promote RN billing in primary care

Strategy 24.2 North Carolina Medicaid and private payers should pilot coding processes that allow optimal use of RN services within primary care.

Desired Result

There will be more opportunities to financially support the inclusion of RNs on the primary care team to support value-based reimbursement goals and improve care coordination.

Why does the task force recommend this strategy?

The integration of RN-led services in primary care settings presents a valuable opportunity for Medicaid and private payers to enhance patient care while potentially reducing overall health care costs. Nurses can play a crucial role in supporting primary care services, such as the need for enhanced care coordination and care management, especially among patients with chronic conditions. Increasing the opportunities to integrate RN-led services in these roles can present a positive business case for the practice and maximizes their ability to function to the fullest extent of their scope of practice.

Related Recommendations from Other Groups

Proceedings of a Conference on Preparing Registered Nurses for Enhanced Roles in Primary Care:

“Payers should develop alternative payment models—such as shared savings for reducing expensive hospital admissions, re-admissions, and emergency department visits—so that the work of all primary care team members, including RNs, adds value rather than simply increases expenses. In fee-for-service systems, specific RN-visit types, such as Medicare wellness visits and care coordination, should be reimbursed at a higher level. RNs should be encouraged to acquire a National Practitioner Identifier (through the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System) for both payment and tracking purposes.”

-https://macyfoundation.org/assets/reports/publications/macy_monograph_nurses_2016_webpdf.pdf

Context

Medicaid and private payers can test opportunities to acknowledge services provided by RNs through the following mechanisms:

- **Telehealth and Remote Care Services** - Nurses can effectively manage a wide range of primary care needs via telehealth, from chronic disease monitoring to providing mental health support. By reimbursing for these services, payers can increase access to care for populations that may face barriers to traditional in-office visits, such as those in rural areas or with mobility challenges. NC Medicaid should consider creating nurse-led intervention codes to capture RN inputs to care delivery.
- **Preventive and Wellness Services** - Nurses play a key role in delivering preventive services such as screenings, vaccinations, and health education, which can prevent more costly health care interventions down the line. By covering these services, payers can invest in the overall health of their members, reducing the incidence of preventable diseases and conditions.
- **Collaborative Care Models** - By reimbursing for services provided within team-based care models, Medicaid and private payers can leverage the unique skills and perspectives of nurses, physicians, and other health care professionals. This collaboration can lead to more comprehensive care plans, improved patient satisfaction, and better health outcomes.

“[M]uch of the work that RNs and other primary care team members currently perform is not directly reimbursable under the traditional fee-for-service payment model, meaning that new payment models are needed to facilitate the growth of primary care teams that include RNs.”

- Proceedings of a conference on Preparing Registered Nurses for Enhanced Roles in Primary Care, June 2016. https://macyfoundation.org/assets/reports/publications/macy_monograph_nurses_2016_webpdf.pdf