From: Costello, Stefanie (CMS/OC)
To: Kinney, Rebecca (ACL); Simpson, Melissa (ACL)
Cc: Butler, Susie E. (CMS/OC)
Subject: Updated Information for ACL on Plan Finder
Date: Friday, October 25, 2019 12:52:42 PM

Rebecca and Melissa,

Thank you for providing valuable feedback as SHIP counselors continue to use the new Medicare Plan Finder. We continue to review feedback and make updates based on what we are hearing. But we wanted to share how things are going and give you some updates.

Operationally, we are happy to report that the new Medicare Plan Finder is performing well. We also have implemented multiple enhancements to the new Plan Finder in the months since the public launch, including many that we heard were critically important to SHIPs:

- an option to sort drug plans based on total annual out-of-pocket costs
- showing preferred mail order pharmacy pricing, instead of standard
- updates to low income subsidy data
- updates for drug plans with initial coverage limits
- ability to cancel from the drug dosage screen
- improvements to default values for Medicare Numbers and ZIP codes on enrollment screens

Calls from SHIP counselors to the SHIP Plan Finder support line at the call center have been low – less than 200 since the start of OE. Callers to the support line are mainly looking for drug and health plan cost-related information. This mirrors the feedback that we are seeing through the dedicated online SHIP survey tool as well. Based on the overall feedback, we've been focusing on improvements in a number of specific areas.

Drug Costs

We realize that there continues to be concern over drug pricing. As you know, prescription information is now populated from personal Medicare claims history with accurate brand, dosage, and frequency information. This includes a feature to edit, add, and remove prescription drugs to ensure an accurate list is used for pricing and comparison. We also have built in pop-ups to notify users when there might be lower-cost generics available. We are in the process of adding tips to remind people to check the dosage, quantity, packaging, and frequency of each drug when building a drug list. We believe users who add drugs on their own may be accepting the default amounts supplied by Plan Finder, without verifying or updating these values to the specific amounts they actually use, which may be causing users to experience extremely high cost estimates in the plan results.

Plan Data Accuracy

CMS uses a rigorous plan data submission and review process. We worked with Medicare Advantage and Part D plans throughout the process, including offering multiple data previews

that were available to all plans for 3 discrete windows. Plans were able to submit questions, comments, and corrections to CMS during these preview windows.

Even with this careful submission and review process, it has always been the case that some errors around plan data (drug dosages, drug pricing, plan benefits) are discovered, especially as the data for the next plan year is publicly released and flexibility for structuring new types of benefit packages increases. To address this reality, the new Medicare Plan Finder is built using a modern application architecture that enables much more rapid updates than were possible with the old Plan Finder, with no downtime and no impact to users. The new Medicare Plan Finder also incorporates more frequent data updates, so that any data updates made in the plan data system are reflected to users in Medicare Plan Finder within a 48-hour window.

Printing

We have made a number of enhancements to address issues with printing too much white space, issues with fonts displaying, and how Plan Finder works with different browsers. We've also investigated options for improvements to address complaints about difficulties in printing comparison pages with three side-by-side plans, and will be recommending that users print these pages in landscape mode for best viewing. We'll continue to look into additional reports of printing issues for possible updates after OE.

Pharmacies

Many of the changes to the display and selection of pharmacies are the result of data and research-based design decisions. We have also responded to some concerns by implementing improvements, such as switching to show preferred mail order pharmacy pricing instead of standard pricing. Because we continue to see confusion around how to switch pharmacies and ZIP codes, we'll be developing a job aid resource in addition to the "pointer" video that is already available, and will continue to investigate options for additional enhancements to consider after OE.

We will continue to update and add resources to our Plan Finder training page posted at https://cmsnationaltrainingprogram.cms.gov/node/197. We also encourage SHIPs to use the dedicated SHIP support line and survey during Open Enrollment to get help as they work with beneficiaries.

We are committed to iterating on improvements to the Plan Finder, both during and after Open Enrollment. We genuinely value input from SHIPs throughout this process, as we work together to help people understand their Medicare options and make informed choices.

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