

Meeting Summary for BHP ADULT Quality, Access & Policy Committee Zoom Meeting

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Quick recap

Kris Noam (Carelton) presented data on behavioral health outpatient services utilization among Husky Health adult members in Connecticut for 2021, examining the relationship between service utilization and factors such as unstable housing, social drivers of health, and specific mental health diagnoses. The team also discussed the referral process for behavioral health services, the impact of cannabis legalization on cannabis use disorder diagnoses, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on service utilization.

Next steps

Kris to send the updated presentation to David Kaplan.

Bonni Hopkins/Kris Noam (Carelton) to send out the presentation slides to meeting attendees, including the list of acronyms and statistical terms.

Carelton team to prepare a follow-up presentation on the provider network and system of care analysis for the next meeting.

Any additional questions from attendees should be sent to Bonni and Kris.

Summary

Presentation Sharing and Inpatient Trends

Behavioral Health Outpatient Services Utilization

Kris presents data on behavioral health outpatient services utilization among Husky Health adult members in Connecticut for 2021. The study includes 163,143 members who used these services at least once, representing 16.7% of the total Husky Health population. Kris discusses demographic characteristics of users, noting that females and white members were more likely to utilize services. The presentation also examines the relationship between service utilization and factors such as unstable housing, social drivers of health, and specific mental health diagnoses. Kris indicates that members with trauma, PTSD, personality disorders, OCD, and bipolar disorder were most likely to use outpatient services.

Psychiatric Diagnosis Accuracy and Substance Use

Kris discussed the accuracy of psychiatric diagnoses, emphasizing that they could be different depending on the level of care. Dr. Esa Tek questioned the accuracy of these diagnoses, suggesting that they might be overused by primary care doctors. Kris clarified that the diagnoses could be received at any time during the year, not just during outpatient visits. Co-Chair Kelly Phenix and Neva Caldwell also raised concerns about the accuracy of diagnoses, emphasizing the need for a summary report to ensure accuracy. Kris then presented data on people with a substance use disorder diagnosis, highlighting that 3 quarters of members in remission utilized behavioral health outpatient services. Kelly asked for clarification on the term "remission," which Kris and Bonni explained as a diagnosis indicating that a substance use disorder is no longer active.

Mental Health Diagnosis and Service Utilization

Kris discussed the utilization of different services by members, focusing on those with mental health diagnoses. He noted that members who utilized behavioral health outpatient services had a higher percentage of utilizing other services compared to those who did not. Bonni

emphasized the importance of considering the clinical significance of these differences, while Dr. Tek raised concerns about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on service utilization.

Behavioral Health Referral Process Challenges

In the meeting, the team discussed the referral process for behavioral health services, particularly for intensive outpatient programs (IOPs). Erika clarified that for Husky Health members, there is no requirement for a failure of a lower level of care to be eligible for IOP. However, Dr. Tek shared his experience that it is often difficult to refer someone to IOP without providing outpatient care first. The team also discussed the possibility of virtual IOPs and the challenges faced by providers in managing patient loads.

Behavioral Health Outpatient Service Utilization

Kris presents data on behavioral health outpatient service utilization and members experiencing unstable housing in the Husky Health program. The data shows that members utilizing behavioral health outpatient services had slightly more episodes of care on average than those who did not, except for medical ED visits. For members with substance use disorders, those using behavioral health outpatient services had lower rates of methadone utilization but higher rates of withdrawal management. The percentage of members using behavioral health outpatient services has remained fairly stable from 2020 to 2023, though the total number has increased slightly. Regarding unstable housing, 2.6% of Husky Health members experienced this in 2023, with higher rates among adults. Those with unstable housing had higher rates of mental health and substance use disorder diagnoses, more comorbidities, and higher healthcare utilization and expenditures compared to the general Husky Health population.

Cannabis Legalization Impact on Diagnoses

The group discusses the impact of cannabis legalization on cannabis use disorder diagnoses. Bonni notes an increase in diagnoses, possibly due to reduced stigma and increased help-seeking behavior. However, Dr. Tek observes a decrease in diagnoses in their practice, treating it more like alcohol use. Rob Haswell (DMHAS) clarifies that Connecticut legalized cannabis in July 2021, so the current data wouldn't reflect changes yet. The meeting concludes with an announcement of a future presentation on provider network coverage and system analysis.