

## Value-Based Reimbursement Program Changes for Post-Acute Care

Highmark Inc. began offering value-based reimbursement to post-acute care (PAC) providers in 2017. Now that over 90% of the network's providers are comfortable with value-based care, Highmark Inc. is taking value-based reimbursement to the next level.

In collaboration with Helion, it is implementing program changes that include modifications to existing program names and the introduction of a new reimbursement methodology. According to Chris Cycak, Helion's manager, Network Performance Operations, these changes are a step in the right direction for PAC providers, their patients, and Highmark Inc.'s members and entire care continuum.

Here's what you need to know:

### **Value-based care programs now fall under True Performance umbrella**

Moving forward, all value-based reimbursement programs for PAC will fall under Highmark Inc.'s True Performance umbrella. Existing programs are being renamed to reflect the change.

"Highmark Inc.'s programs for both acute and post-acute care already include similar metrics and measures, but will now share a similar name," Cycak says. "Aligning the programs incentivizes the hospital or primary care physician to work with their downstream PAC providers and vice versa."

New program names for skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) and home health include:

- **True Performance SNF Pay-for-Value**, formerly Skilled Nursing Facility Pay-for-Value
- **True Performance SNF Pay-for-Value Plus**, formerly Skilled Nursing Facility Pay-for-Value Plus
- **True Performance Home Health Pay-for-Value**, formerly Home Health Pay-for-Value

### **Highmark Inc. is introducing Episodic Bundled Payment Programs**

Highmark Inc. and Helion are excited to implement the next evolution in value-based reimbursement. Episodic Bundled Payment Programs are site-of-care specific programs that offer PAC providers more independence and the opportunity for increased reimbursement.

"This is a cultural change," Cycak says. "Providers, in most cases, are used to getting paid fee-for-service or with the methodology Medicare uses. We are turning things upside-down, but we're holding on to some elements of previous reimbursement programs, so it won't feel completely different."

### **How episode-of-care reimbursement works**

The current Pay-for-Value programs are successful and serve as the foundation for value-based reimbursement for the PAC network. They provide payment for each individual action providers take toward reaching a predetermined goal of care.

With an Episodic Bundled Payment Program, providers get paid one amount per episode for reaching a measurable outcome instead of piecemeal. The provider determines the steps taken to reach that goal and, in doing so, controls the cost of care.

“This new methodology gets away from the fee-for-service mentality and offers a one-time payment per episode that is adjusted based on the acuity of the member,” Cycak says. “We’re giving providers the autonomy to provide quality care and manage the cost of that care while making sure that their patients and Highmark Inc. members are meeting measurable outcomes.”

### **What a bundled payment model means for post-acute care providers**

Highmark Inc.’s new programs put more control into the hands of providers. The new methodology challenges providers to get creative with health care delivery and make smarter, cost-effective care choices. When they meet quality and cost thresholds, providers get paid more.

“Providers have a chance to earn significantly more in this program by keeping costs down,” Cycak says. “When I say costs, it’s not just at the site of care. It’s the cost of keeping patients out of the hospital or from going to the emergency department. It’s closing gaps that could lead to another health complication down the line.”

Helion helps providers manage the costs associated with a care episode effectively. They offer connections to vendor discounts and Highmark Inc. resources focused on how to be creative and smart with costs of care.

### **Transition to Episodic Bundled Payment Programs**

Helion is currently piloting two episodic bundled payment programs:

- **True Performance Home Health Episodic Bundled Payment Program**, in market since February 2020 and formerly known as Home Health Episodic Value-Based Program
- **True Performance SNF Episodic Payment Program**, in market since March 2021 and formerly known as Skilled Nursing Facility Episodic Value-Based Program

According to Cycak, Helion will be scaling the new Highmark Inc. programs in early 2022, taking a phased approach. “Over time, we expect the majority of the network to be on this type of program,” Cycak says. “But there will be considerations made for providers who may not have a volume threshold that makes sense for this type of program. We’ll meet our providers wherever they are and work with them to reach their reimbursement goals.”



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To learn more about the changes to Highmark Inc.'s value-based reimbursement programs, reach out to the [Helion Service Desk](#). The Helion Service Desk is separate from the Helion Provider Portal. You will need to set up an account to utilize the Service Desk and will be prompted to create a password the first time you access the link.

<b>Old Program Name</b>	<b>New Program Name</b>
Skilled Nursing Facility Pay-for-Value	True Performance SNF Pay-for-Value
Skilled Nursing Facility Pay-for-Value Plus Program	True Performance SNF Pay-for-Value Plus
Skilled Nursing Facility Episodic Value-Based Program	True Performance SNF Episodic Bundled Payment Program
Home Health Pay for Value (P4V) Program	True Performance Home Health Pay-for-Value
Home Health Episodic Value-Based Program	True Performance Home Health Episodic Bundled Payment Program

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