



The Special Needs Unit

The Special Needs Unit provides proactive holistic coordination of care for at risk or chronically ill members, to reduce morbidity, and to improve the health and well-being of members. Our primary purpose is to ensure that each member with Special Needs receives access to appropriate primary care, access to specialists trained and skilled in the needs of the member, information about access to a specialist as PCP as appropriate, and information about and access to all covered services appropriate to the member's condition or circumstance.

Examples of members with Special Needs will include but not be limited to: Children with Special Health Care Needs including those requiring skilled or unskilled home shift care. Members with physical and/or intellectual/ developmental disabilities, those with HIV/AIDS, those with significant behavioral challenges.

The Special Needs Unit is comprised of both nurses and social workers that utilize Prospective Care Management (*PCM*®), Highmark Wholecare's approach to the members we serve, considers the needs of the individual both *prospectively* (that is, before a need becomes a condition requiring treatment) and *holistically* (taking into account the totality of a person's social, emotional and physical environment) with the goal of improving health outcomes over a lifetime of care. The case managers assess for how the social determinants of health impact the members ability to access health care.

Our SNU staff is organized into Interdisciplinary Management Pods. Each pod is a self-contained team comprised of care coordinators, utilization management coordinators, navigators, a medical director, pharmacist, quality improvement staff and a customer services representative. The pods utilize resources to help support quality of care for our members, and impact member and provider satisfaction. Providers involved in the member's care are also included in pod meetings. This integrated team model facilitates and supports strong collaboration between the physical and behavioral health needs of the members and effectively ensures our members experience high quality and appropriate care. The case managers within the Special Needs Unit serve on interagency teams upon request by a Member or their family to facilitate and coordinate delivery of Physical Health Services contained in treatment plans for children and/or adults including, but not limited to, Individual Family Service Plans, Individual Educational Plans, Individual Habilitation Plans, and Individual Behavioral Health Treatment Plans.

Special Programs

Highmark Wholecare has five comprehensive Lifestyle Management Programs that address the needs of both children and adults with chronic health care conditions. All of the programs emphasize member education and self-management, as well as provider support and education. The Lifestyle Management Programs are:

-Asthma Program

- Cardiac Program
- COPD Program
- Diabetes Program
- MOM Matters ®

To learn more about these programs please call 1-800-392-1147.

Training

Highmark Wholecare ensures that its providers are culturally competent and knowledgeable about treating diverse individuals with special needs. Please review the attached training materials on Cultural Competency and Treating Special Needs populations. They can also be found on our web-site in the Provider section under forms and reference material in the Cultural Competency Toolkit.

Recipient Restriction Program

Highmark WholecareSM maintains a Recipient Restriction Program in cooperation with the Department of Human Services, which restricts members who miss-utilize medical services or pharmacy benefits. Those members who are in the program are restricted to certain practitioners. Highmark Wholecare enforces and monitors these restrictions.

NaviNet[®] is a separate company that provides an internet-based application for providers to streamline data exchanges between their offices and Highmark Wholecare such as, routine eligibility, benefits and claims status inquiries.

Health benefits or health benefit administration may be provided by or through Highmark Wholecare, coverage by Gateway Health Plan, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association ("Highmark Wholecare").