



POSITION STATEMENT

HEALTH CARE/MANAGED CARE REFORM

The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), the professional organization of certified nurse-midwives and certified midwives in the U.S., encourages the development of a health care system that enables women and their families to receive appropriate care based on need, regardless of their ability to pay or where they live.

ACNM supports legislation that maintains the balance between controlling the cost of health care and ensuring that consumers receive adequate and accessible quality health care.

ACNM supports legislation that ensures consumers have access to the full spectrum of qualified health care professionals and providers.

ACNM supports legislation that enables consumers to hold managed health plans and self insured plans accountable for their policies and practices by removing the ERISA (Employee Retirement and Income Security Act) shield and allowing for the enforcement of standards by the state.

ACNM also supports legislation that ensures consumers have the following basic rights when participating in a health plan:

Access and Choice

Health plans must have an adequate number, mix, and range of health care providers within reasonable distance of the patient's home or workplace, to ensure that consumers have timely access to the benefits offered by the plan.

Health plans must ensure direct access to women's health care services in a variety of settings by a variety of health care providers that are accessible and community based. Women must have the ability to designate certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) as their primary care providers.

Health plans must provide comprehensive benefits for women's health. Coverage must be provided for maternity care and births in all settings that are safe and cost effective, including accredited hospitals, accredited free-standing birth centers, and the home.

Health plans must cover emergency and urgent care services, if such services are deemed necessary in the opinion of a prudent lay person, without regard to the licensure or certification of the provider of such services.

Enrollees of health plans must have access to specialized treatment when the treatment is deemed medically necessary by the professional judgment of the treating health care provider.

Health plans must provide the ability for consumers to choose their health care provider within the plan or choose to enter a point of service plan that allows them to go outside of a network to see the provider of their choice, recognizing the need for equitable cost sharing arrangements.

Health plans must provide a mechanism to obtain timely approval of referrals and additional services without delaying evaluation and treatment plans.

Quality Improvement

Health plans must have a program that continually assesses the quality of care provided.

Health plans must institute quality improvement programs that systematically review enrollees' health status, their access to necessary health care including specialty care, the plans' utilization review, administrative practices and patient satisfaction. This should include appropriate mechanisms for peer review.

The use of technology, drugs, and intervention in the provision of care should be linked to evidence-based research and the fully informed consent of the patient wherever possible, and should be individualized to meet the health needs of each consumer.

Nondiscrimination/Equitable Access to Networks

Consumers may not be discriminated against with regard to participation in a health plan because of race, gender, language, age, disability, sexual orientation, pre-existing condition, health status, or anticipated need for services.

A network plan may not discriminate against a health care provider by denying participation in the network because of the provider's race, gender, age, disability (to the extent that the disability does not impair the professional ability to provide services), sexual orientation, employment status, or lack of affiliation with a hospital.

Health plans must not discriminate in participation, reimbursement, or indemnification against any professional solely on the basis of their license or certification.

Information Disclosure

Health plans must provide consumers with access to information about health plan policies and providers, including information about plan benefits, the financial obligations of the consumer for both internal and out of network/out of service area costs, utilization review requirements, and grievance and appeals procedures.

Information will be provided in a uniform and easily understandable manner to allow easy comparison across plans, with sensitivity to those who have a language, literacy, or other barrier.

Due Process and Appeals

All consumers should have the right to a fair and efficient process for resolving differences with their health plans, health care providers, and the institutions that serve them, including a rigorous system of internal review and an independent system of external review.

To ensure that consumers are guaranteed continuity of care, health care providers must have the opportunity to enter into a health plan and receive reasonable notice of termination with the ability to appeal a termination decision.

During involuntary transfer from a health plan or provider, a pregnant woman should have the right to continue maternity and postpartum care with the provider of her choice, without loss of coverage.

Responsibility

Consumers should be able to hold health plans legally responsible for injuries suffered as a direct result of the policies of the plan.

Health plans should provide education and encourage participation by consumers in their personal health care to promote consumer responsibility for healthy lifestyle behaviors and practices, and to promote utilization of appropriate health care services.

Health plans should support clinical education for a variety of health professionals and clinical research, including clinical trials and care for patients seeking “experimental” treatments.

Source: Political and Economic Affairs Committee (PEAC)
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