

## Announcing 2024 Skilled Nursing Facility Incentive Program measures

**Date issued:** Sep 28, 2023

**Effective date:** Oct 1, 2023

**To:** Administrators, directors of nursing, and quality improvement directors at skilled nursing facilities caring for our members

**From:** Patrick Arnold, Vice President, Healthcare Contracting and Management

In this News Alert, we're announcing:

- The criteria and associated incentive payments for the 2024 Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) Incentive Program. Your facility will have an opportunity to earn up to a **6% increase** to your Base Rate (SNF Per Diem and Vent Per Diem Base Rates, as applicable) if you meet all the criteria included in the measures.
- A webinar, required to earn credit in the upcoming incentive performance period. It will be available to view in the first quarter of 2024 to address responses to the 2023 SNF Incentive Program Questionnaire. Topics will include:
  - Using our online Authorization Manager tool to simplify and expedite SNF authorizations.
  - Transportation options and other community services and resources available for your patients.
  - Massachusetts MOLST to POLST Transition.

### 2024 SNF Incentive Program requirements

This year, the performance period will be October 1, 2023 through May 31, 2024. To participate in the 2024 SNF Incentive Program you must:

- Be contracted with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts as of October 1, 2023.
- Meet our contract conditions of participation.
- Facilities must be open and accept patients for the entire measurement period. They must also remain in good standing with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, including, but not limited to:
  - No Jeopardy and/or Substandard Quality of Care findings.
  - No admission freezes.
  - No denials of payment.

#### Incentives apply to these products:

- HMO Blue
- PPO
- Medicare Advantage (if you are contracted for this product)

We do not offer an incentive for care provided to Indemnity, Medex®, Managed Blue for Seniors members, or members receiving care in Transactional Care Units (TCUs).

## Incentive payment details

We will pay for any incentives you earn during the performance period of October 1, 2023 through May 31, 2024 via an increase to your inpatient per diem rates in the 2025 calendar year. The incentive must be re-earned for each performance period. We will not carry these rates forward into subsequent years.

Measure	Measure description
<b>Eligibility measures:</b> You must pass these measures before we will evaluate your facility for any of the incentive-earning measures.	
Provider Central registration	The person responsible for reporting the data must register for Provider Central, <a href="http://bluecrossma.com/provider">bluecrossma.com/provider</a> , by May 1, 2024. We communicate program updates and reminders online, so it's important to register.
	If the person reporting your data doesn't have access to Provider Central when it's time to report your performance, we cannot accept your submission.
Ambulance use  <i>Performance period is October 1, 2023, through May 31, 2024</i>	We will audit data from claims submitted with dates of service from October 1, 2023, through May 31, 2024. You must use a participating ground ambulance for 90% of your non-emergent transfers.  <i>If you have fewer than 10 non-emergent transfers, you may have only one instance of a non-Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts-participating ground ambulance provider.</i>

Measure	Measure description	
<b>Incentive measures:</b> You are only eligible to receive payments if you pass the eligibility criteria and submit information for the Transitions of care measure.		
Incentive measure	Measure description	Potential incentive
Quality measures (using CMS Nursing Home Compare <sup>1</sup> ) <i>The time period for the data is listed below.</i>	Percentage of short-stay residents who newly received an antipsychotic medication	Total of 4.1% <i>See details below on how we use percentiles to calculate your incentive.</i>
	Percentage of short-stay residents who made improvements in function	
	Percentage of short-stay residents who had an outpatient emergency department visit	
	Percentage of short-stay residents who were re-hospitalized after a nursing home admission	
	Rate of successful return to home and community from a skilled nursing facility	
	Percentage of short-stay residents whose medications were reviewed and who received follow-up care when medication issues were identified	
	Percentage of residents who are at or above an expected ability to care for themselves at discharge	
	Percentage of residents who are at or above an expected ability to move around at discharge	
	Percentage of infections patients got during their SNF stay that resulted in hospitalization	
CMS STAR results as of July 31, 2024	CMS STAR results as of July 31, 2024	<b>0.4%</b>
Transitions of care <i>Performance period is October 1, 2023–May 31, 2024</i>	Learn more: <a href="#">Transitions of care template</a> <i>Note: All responses must include a detailed description of the components to answer the question. If not, you'll only receive partial credit.</i>	<b>1%</b>
Attend Blue Cross webinar for the full presentation	Blue Cross will hold a webinar the first quarter of 2024	<b>0.5%</b>

<sup>1</sup>You can find measure descriptions on the [CMS Nursing Home Compare website](#).

## About the measures

### CMS quality measures that use publicly reported data

To determine your performance on the total of nine quality and STAR measures, we will download data from CMS' Nursing Home Compare at the end of July 2024. Here's the methodology we'll use to determine your quality measure incentive.

### Using percentiles as benchmarks

For each quality measure of the Nursing Home Compare data, we identified the Massachusetts 40th and 90th percentiles. Those percentiles will be our benchmarks.

Each benchmark includes a built-in confidence interval. Facilities whose score is below either the 40th or 90th percentile, but still within the confidence interval, are considered to meet the 40th or 90th benchmark. The benchmarks listed below include the confidence interval. We have listed the measures for which a lower **percentage means better performance on the measure**.

### Calculating an incentive based on the benchmarks

Facilities have the potential to earn up to 4.1% for all 9 quality measures listed in the table above. If you meet the CMS Five STAR quality measure listed in the table below, it is also worth 0.40%.

This is equivalent to earning Benchmark 3 for all measures.

Measure description	Benchmark 1 (less than the 40 <sup>th</sup> percentile)	Benchmark 2 (equal to or above the 40 <sup>th</sup> percentile, and below the 90 <sup>th</sup> percentile)	Benchmark 3 (equal to the 90 <sup>th</sup> percentile or better)
Percentage of short-stay residents who newly received an antipsychotic medication <b>(the lower the percentage, the better the performance on the measure)</b>	Greater than 1.54%  Earn: 0%	Between 1.54% and 0.32%  Earn: 0.23%	Equal to 0.31% or lower  Earn: 0.45%
Percentage of short-stay residents who made improvements in function	Less than 70.07%  Earn: 0%	Between 70.07% and 86.94%  Earn 0.23%	Equal to 86.95% or higher  Earn: 0.46%
Percentage of short-stay residents who had an outpatient emergency department visit <b>(the lower the percentage, the better the performance on the measure)</b>	Greater than 13.21%  Earn: 0%	Between 13.21% and 7.10%  Earn: 0.23%	Equal to 7.09% or lower  Earn: 0.45%
Percentage of short-stay residents who were re-hospitalized after a nursing home admission <b>(the lower the percentage, the better the performance on the measure)</b>	Greater than 26.42%  Earn: 0%	Between 26.42% and 19.03%  Earn: 0.23%	Equal to 19.02 % or lower  Earn: 0.46%

Rate of successful return to home and community from a SNF	Less than 53.83% Earn: 0%	Between 53.83% and 64.61% Earn: 0.23%	Equal to 64.62% or higher Earn: 0.46%
Percentage of SNF residents whose medications were reviewed and who received follow-up care when medication issues were identified	Less than 96.5% Earn 0%	Equal to 96.5% or higher Earn 0.45%	
Percentage of residents who are at or above an expected ability to care for themselves at discharge	Less than 39.30% Earn 0%	Between 39.30% and 60.09% Earn 0.23%	Equal to 60.10% or higher Earn 0.46%
Percentage of residents who are at or above an expected ability to move around at discharge	Less than 37.70% Earn 0%	Between 37.70% and 59.99% Earn 0.23%	Equal to 60.0% or higher Earn 0.46%
Percentage of infections patients got during their SNF stay that resulted in hospitalization  <i>(the lower the percentage, the better the performance on the measure)</i>	Greater than 7.62% Earn 0%	Between 7.62% and 5.34% Earn 0.23%	Equal to 5.33% or lower Earn 0.45%

Measure description	Benchmark 1	Benchmark 2	Benchmark 3
CMS STAR Results as of July 31, 2024	1-3 STARS Earn: 0%	4 STARS Earn: 0.2%	5 STARS Earn: 0.4%

**Finding a mental health provider:** If you need to refer your patient to an in-network mental health provider, you may use our [Find a Doctor & Estimate Costs tool](#). Or, if you are having difficulty finding one, our [Care Management](#) team can help.

**Follow up care:** We understand that there may be barriers that members face in following up with the care providers upon discharge. We'd like to remind you that our care managers are always available to support our members. Please contact us if you'd like to refer a patient. Visit our [Care Management](#) page to learn more.

## Submit your data by the June 15, 2024 deadline

You must use our online reporting tool to submit data on your facility's measures by **June 15, 2024**. The submission template is available now so that you can begin collecting data for your facility.

- [Transitions of care](#)

The online reporting tool will be available on June 1, 2024. Your NPI will be your password. You can access the tools by logging on to [bluecrossma.com/provider](https://bluecrossma.com/provider). Select **Quality & Performance>SNF Incentive Program**.

- We suggest you cut and paste the information from the templates on your desktop into the online tool.
- All responses must include a detailed description of the components to answer the question. If not, you'll only receive partial credit.

*We encourage you to save a copy of your submission in case you are asked to substantiate it.*

## Reminder on how to find a participating ambulance provider

Please do not use non-participating ambulance providers to transport our members when a participating ground ambulance provider is available.

To find a participating ground ambulance provider, use our website's [Find a Doctor](#) feature. Choose the member's plan and then type **Ambulance** in the search window. If you need a list of ambulance providers that service your geographic area, please contact your network representative for ambulance providers (see contact information below).

Here's a partial list of ambulance companies that **do not** participate in our contracted ground ambulance provider network, and a partial list of private ambulance companies that participate **only** in our **Indemnity** product.

Non-participating providers	Indemnity only providers (These providers may be used for indemnity members only)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MedStar Ambulance companies, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ MedStar Ambulance, Inc.</li><li>○ MedStar EMS, Inc.</li><li>○ Pioneer Valley EMS, Inc.</li><li>○ Gardner Emergency Medical Services</li><li>○ Fitchburg Emergency Medical Services</li></ul></li><li>• National Ambulance, Inc.</li><li>• Patriot Ambulance, Inc.</li><li>• Trinity EMS, Inc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Boston Medical Center</li><li>• Professional Ambulance</li></ul>

## Questions?

If you have any questions about the SNF Incentive Program, please contact Diane Vetrano at [Diane.Vetrano@bcbsma.com](mailto:Diane.Vetrano@bcbsma.com) or call **1-617-246-4602**.

For ambulance provider questions, please contact Nicole Tully at [Nicole.Tully@bcbsma.com](mailto:Nicole.Tully@bcbsma.com) or **1-617-246-9334**.

For Provider Central access, please contact the Help Desk at [providercentral@bcbsma.com](mailto:providercentral@bcbsma.com).

As always, thank you for the care you provide to our members.

