

5 Steps To Maximize Your CMS Star Ratings



Compliance and Star Ratings are critical components to a Health Plan's overall Medicare strategy.

With the implementation of the Affordable Care Act and ongoing Health Reform, it's crucial for Payers to optimize every aspect of their pharmacy strategy – including their Star Ratings as it pertains to their Pharmacy Program.

Included herein are 5 steps to help Medicare plans to maximize their CMS Star Ratings.

1. Understand the fundamentals of how Star Ratings are calculated and the benchmarks.

CMS provides details in the technical notes about which data sources are used for various measures and how calculations are performed. They also provide information for the individual, domain (related measures that are grouped), and summary levels for Part C, Part D and overall ratings.

This should be used to develop improvement strategies and target internal resources to areas of concern.

2. Collaborate with all leadership levels within your organization – top down.

Success depends on executive-level commitments and collaboration among various departments within an organization. The organization's leadership needs to be made aware of financial impacts of Star Ratings to the health plan.

Consequences of poor ratings include potential loss of membership and reduced payments from CMS. Quantify the costs and benefits to build support and justify a budget.

Think about how departments can more successfully coordinate their activities to improve ratings. Successful quality initiatives require funding, support, and resources from throughout the organization.

3. Look for measures with the highest weights or improvements that may positively affect multiple measures.

Some star measures carry significantly higher weights, such as the Part D adherence measures at three times the standard weight. Yet other measures have related data sources or potential for shared clinical improvement initiatives.

Identify opportunities for programs or quality initiatives that affect multiple ratings or those with higher weights. Smart and savvy use of resources will save money and result in more significant ratings improvements.

4. Use outside vendor resources and reporting tools wisely.

If you outsource functions such as Medication Therapy Management (MTM) and pharmacy claims processing, these vendors should collaborate to improve Star Ratings.

From reporting to quality improvement initiatives, vendor expertise helps to supplement internal resources and directly affects many of the Part D measures.

If there are additional fees, ask for Return on Investment (ROI) guarantees for the dollars spent and help in quantifying the projected costs and benefits.

5. Seek out the *low-lying fruit*.

Improvements that take fewer resources or may be quickly implemented provide positive outcomes and quick ROI. Consider predictive modeling tools to identify and better target interventions and actions for the most effect.

Small successes build positive momentum toward the larger and longer-term changes needed.

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