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6 Priorities to Address Health Equity Regulatory Changes

Replacing the current Reward Factor with the Health Equity Index (HEI) in the 2027 Star Ratings has left health plans with many questions and concerns about how these changes will impact their quality workplan and overall Star Rating. Closing gaps in care for members with social risk factors can be complex and health equity often requires significant resources, including staff and other resources to implement them.

Our advisors with decades of experience leading health plan quality programs and working in Stars identified six next steps for health plans to consider.

Social determinants versus social drivers

Social determinants

Social determinants are the conditions and circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. Determinants can indicate finality, suggesting that these factors are fixed and unchangeable.

Social drivers

Social drivers recognize individuals and communities can actively influence health conditions by addressing these factors and that policies, systems and structures play a role in shaping outcomes.

Start building your HEI workplan

Priority 1
Analyze CMS Data

Analyze CMS stratified data for health equity index population to identify measures where your health plan is performing poorly compared to the national benchmark. This is any measure that you received a -1.

Priority 2
Data Management

Most health plans lack insight into which members contend with social drivers of health or those that will fall into HEI population.

- Race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identify (SOGI) can also be important demographic information to identify members at risk for social drivers of health.

- Integrating the social drivers of health and health equity data into member profiles provides a more comprehensive view of member experiences and enables plans to develop personalized solutions.

→ Healthmine's platform consolidates all member data in a single place, so health plans can quickly identify gaps in their data and launch campaigns to capture the missing pieces.

Priority 3
Whole-Person Care

Through the lens of whole-person care, health plans can incorporate social drivers into care plans to provide members with the right treatment, tools and resources to manage their health. To effectively engage hard-to-reach and vulnerable populations in their care, plans will need to use different communication models. Plans should evaluate their current member engagement capabilities and establish the right technology partnerships to support omnichannel outreach. Closing data gaps in member contact information and communication preferences is also key to improving engagement.

→ Healthmine assists health plans in achieving whole-person care with comprehensive member records that include a member's health disparities, health risks and SDOH.

Priority 4
Community Partnerships

Establishing strong partnerships with community leaders enables plans to implement targeted solutions to populations that need it most.

Priority 5
Value-Based Care

Plans should work closely with provider networks to develop value-based contracts that benefit both parties while accounting for health equity initiatives.

Priority 6
Stakeholder Participation and Recruitment

Partnering with the right stakeholders ensures that initiatives are guided by experienced teams who understand on-the-ground health equity challenges. Health equity should be incorporated into recruitment efforts, training programs and leadership development to ensure that teams reflect the populations they serve.

→ Healthmine's expert advisors can facilitate stakeholder conversations to educate on the importance of health equity work across the organization and come to a shared sense of ownership over these initiatives.

What to do later

01 Update workplans to include strategies to calculate performance thresholds on all measures considering removal of the Reward Factor. Consider leveraging the quality improvement measure as an important tactic to maintain Star Rating performance.

02 Carefully consider efforts to expand product offerings to attract HEI eligible populations. Ensure you are calculating the overall impact to your Star Rating performance, and the risks and benefits associated with growth of this vulnerable population.

Regardless of eligibility for the HEI, health plans need to lay a lot of groundwork to properly address the social drivers of health to ensure maximum quality gap closure. Plans need to foster wide-spread health equity and social risk initiatives across their organizations to succeed in the new landscape. Healthmine can help plans successfully launch and maintain this work to achieve additional bonus payments.

Build your HEI workplan with Healthmine

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Contact

✉ solutions@healthmine.com
📞 469.300.6231