Stop pulling providers in different directions

Why the approach health plans take to contacting their provider partners is critical to winning their cooperation

THE PROBLEMS

Problem 1. Health plans overwhelm providers with communication through multiple points of contact

Health plan perspective on provider communications: “It’s the individual messages”

Provider perspective on provider relations: “Lots of the same”

12 hours
Avg. monthly hours physician practice spends interacting with their payers

12–15
Avg. number of payers a provider contracts with

Providers indicate that one of the most burdensome aspects of working with plans are the frequent ‘touches’ from different parts of a plan. As most providers work with multiple plans, these communications can become overwhelming and diminish the value of the outreach.

Roots of Problem 1

Too many speakers
Multiple departments communicating independently with providers

Lack of prioritization
Critical messages overwhelmed in a torrent of communications

Problem 2. Health plans fail to efficiently address provider inquiries because of internal silos

How providers submit inquiries to the health plan

Ideal route
Questions that can’t be answered with self-help tools are directed to provider relations staff to triage

De facto route
Provider raises questions in the moment to plan team with which they are interacting

Contracting
Provider Relations
Clinical

Most plans have created a suite of self-help tools designed to address provider inquiries; however, these tools require providers to understand—and follow—a health plan-designated path for resolution. More commonly, providers submit inquiries via the ‘path of least’ resistance to a recent or familiar contact—regardless of the type of inquiry.

Roots of Problem 2

Too many speakers
Multiple departments communicating independently with providers

Lack of prioritization
Critical messages overwhelmed in a torrent of communications

THE SOLUTIONS

Solution 1. Create your organization’s “Sole Plan Voice” for talking to providers

Establish protocols for the publication of communications:
- Which providers will receive this message?
- How will we publish this communication?
- Who is sending the material?

Prioritize communications to correspond with plan goals

Utilize queuing system to organize communications

Hold staff accountable for sending communication policies

Ensure all staff know to direct communications through the proper channel

Value-based care

Clinical

Contracting

Provider relations department

Providers

Empower plan staff
Create a culture of accountability to ensure provider relations staff enforce rules on who provides contact with inquiries

Create queuing system
Log provider inquiries in an easily accessible, transparent queue

Establish response protocols
Establish department-level protocols, timelines and accountability for responding to inquiries referred by the provider relations team

Solution 2. Build a “Single Point of Contact” for your providers

To reduce annoyance and confusion for provider partners, create a single or limited set of contacts who receive incoming inquiries.

For more information on strengthening provider relationships, read: A new era of payer-provider partnerships

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