

Key Facts

- Congress and the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare (CMS) recognized the impact of social determinants of health, particularly for those with chronic conditions, by allowing Medicare Advantage plans to tailor benefits to targeted chronically ill populations and by expanding the definition of primarily health-related services for supplemental benefits.
- Medicare Advantage plans and providers are working to address SDOH by identifying needs and working directly with community-based organizations to meet these needs and improve health outcomes.

Policy Recommendation

Better Medicare Alliance strongly supports the important policy changes made that allow health plans the flexibility needed to address beneficiaries' SDOH. Going forward, we call on CMS to actively explore ways to account for SDOH and functional limitations in the risk adjustment model for Medicare Advantage plan payments, as well as to improve the accuracy of Star Ratings measures by reviewing trials of new measures that include SDOH.

What are Social Determinants of Health?

Social determinants of health (SDOH) are defined as the complex, integrated, and overlapping social and economic risk factors that impact health outcomes and health status. These complex factors impact the lives and health of large numbers of individuals, with particular evidence on older adults as they age. Clinical care alone is not enough to address these needs. Clinical care contributes to only an estimated 20% of health outcomes, while 80% is attributed to SDOH.

Studies show that addressing home safety, access to food and nutrition, access to transportation, in-home care and support, and other social supports improves beneficiary outcomes and lowers health care costs.

Health plans and providers are partnering with community-based organizations, as well as new entrepreneurs, to address these barriers and improve health outcomes for Medicare Advantage beneficiaries, particularly those who are chronically ill and have been identified as impacted by SDOH.

Key Social Determinants of Health



Safety in the Home



Food Insecurity



Lack of Access to Transportation



Utility Needs



Lack of Family and Social Support



Lack of Income

How Medicare Advantage Can Address Social Determinants

- **Value-Based Care:** Value-based payment arrangements incentivizes payers and providers to identify and address beneficiaries' SDOH.
- **Care Management:** Medicare Advantage plans are uniquely positioned to facilitate coordination between providers and multi-sector partners to develop and implement new ways to address social determinants of health.
- **Flexible Benefit Design:** CMS reinterpreted regulations to allow health plans to target certain supplemental benefits to specific subsets of enrollees enabling improved management of care, including the ability to address SDOH.
- **Expanded Definition of Supplemental Benefits:** Plans can now cover adult day care services, in-home support services, non-opioid pain management, food insecurity, home safety modifications and transportation, allowing plans to offer benefits that directly address SDOH.

Medicare Advantage Innovations to Address Social Determinants

- **Home Safety:** *SilverSneakers*, an innovative community-based fitness program designed for older adults, under contract with Medicare Advantage plans works with older adults at risk to improve balance and mobility.
- **Food Security:** The *Commonwealth Care Alliance's* Medicare Advantage Special Needs Plan developed the "Senior Care Options" program to provide beneficiaries access to weekly meal deliveries. As a result, they found that participants' emergency department visits significantly decreased.
- **Transportation:** *ChenMed*, a physician-led Medicare Advantage plan, helps patients keep their appointments by providing patients with courtesy "door-to-doctor" transportation services.
- **Family and Social Support:** *CareMore Health's* "Togetherness Program" diagnoses and treats loneliness by ensuring patients have free access to medical transportation, lifestyle and wellness programs, and weekly health-related phone calls.