

Advocacy – Essential Health Benefits & Obesity Treatment Coverage

Call to action:

Provide coverage of weight-related services as part of Essential Health Benefits

- Meet with legislators to advocate for obesity treatment coverage (both medical and surgical options), for all beneficiaries covered through the state's Health Insurance Exchange
- Provide insurance coverage for comprehensive obesity counseling and treatment services as part of any standard health benefit package for the overweight or obese patient, including behavioral, pharmaceutical, medical, and surgical treatment (as is in place for other chronic diseases)
- Advocate for health care coverage for prevention efforts, i.e. coverage for exercise programs and dietician visits for anyone with a BMI > 30
- Obesity treatment coverage should be equitable for all Americans, including citizens who are beneficiaries covered through a state Health Insurance Exchange

Statement of the Problem: The Epidemic of Obesity

- Obesity has become an epidemic; the prevalence of obesity in adults has **nearly tripled** in the last 50 years
- This epidemic is also affecting our children. Nearly **one in three** children in America is overweight or obese
- Obesity is a **major cause of death** attributable to heart disease, cancer, and diabetes (which are all comorbid conditions that can be caused from obesity)
- Obesity has been officially recognized as a **disease** that is chronic and deserves treatment. (Recognized by NIH, AMA, IRS, CMS, AHA, ACC, ADA, IDF)
- Treatment of obesity related conditions without treating the disease itself results in significantly higher health care costs (42% higher annual healthcare costs; 77% higher RX costs; 37% higher primary care costs)
- Only 1% of the eligible population is treated through bariatric surgery
- 25% of patients considering bariatric surgery are denied approval by their insurance companies three times before obtaining approval, of which more than half will report worsening health problems during their waiting period
- Bariatric surgery is a **safe, effective and durable treatment** for obesity with a high rate of cure for comorbid conditions, and pays for itself usually within two years
- Bariatric surgery saves lives by resolving obesity-related medical problems and improves productivity by decreasing lost work time and disability
- The disease of obesity is **not covered** under the Essential Health Benefits, leaving each state to decide whether obesity treatment is a covered benefit

- The disease of obesity is **not covered** in the state Health Insurance Exchange for 28 states and Washington DC

For More Information Contact:

(Insert name, address, and contact information of obesity advocate)

2

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