Improved maternal health benefits the whole of society.
Isabella Lovin

As a mother of two young boys, summer is always filled with activity, outdoor fun and creating lasting memories. As I reflect upon what motherhood means to me, I think about all of the mother’s we serve within the Medicaid space, with half of the births in Illinois supported by the program, and I can’t help but to be grateful to be a part of a program and state that works to prioritize maternal health outcomes for Illinoisans.

Each quarter this year, IAMHP is taking time to focus on a priority pillar for the Medicaid Managed Care Organizations and the state of Illinois. And while all are equally important, this second quarter focus on maternal health has been especially personal for me.

I am so proud of the efforts set forth by the MCOs to support moms, babies and their families during one of their most vulnerable and life-changing seasons. From addressing social determinants of health through tailored care coordination programs, to providing gift cards, baby showers and life-saving health supplies, MCOs truly center on the health of mom and baby from pre-pregnancy to birth, and beyond. As such, demonstrating that support outside of clinical services is equally as crucial when working toward improving health outcomes for the entire family.

Illinois’ recent policy decision to become the first state to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage to 12 months, as well as increase reimbursement rates for prenatal and postpartum visits, and increase access to a procedure that could help reduce c-sections and promote safer birthing options only further demonstrates the state’s commitment to the Medicaid program and to the health of both current and future generations to come.

There is certainly still much work to be done, but I am hopeful that we are headed in the right direction.

In good health,
Samantha Olds Frey
CEO, IAMHP
MATERNAL HEALTH MCO FACTS & FIGURES

Half of all births in Illinois are covered by the Medicaid program.

IAMHP’s member health plans continue their commitment to addressing the barriers that affect the health and wellbeing of expectant Medicaid members and their children.

MCOs each provide extensive care coordination support for expectant mothers before and after giving birth through regular campaigns and outreach.

These include, but are not limited to:

- incentives for completing maternity and postpartum care visits
- providing baby supplies
- hosting baby showers
- transportation to ensure compliance with follow-up visits
- providing grants to providers
- launching home food delivery services to support high-risk pregnant members
- educational materials and workshops

Additionally, care coordination support ensures that any social factors or social determinants of health (SDoH) that could hinder the best health outcomes for mother and baby are identified and addressed.
MCO Initiatives

MCOs continue to prioritize quality initiatives related to maternal health and perinatal care including:

- Care Coordination Partnering: with a vendor who specializes in engaging high-risk, pregnant members - provides members who have been identified high-risk with a 12-month program that provides remote monitoring via smartphone, weight scale and blood pressure monitor.
- Grant funding in the southern region to address disparities with low birth weight and maternal health including 2 Clinical Therapists to provide counseling during pregnancy and one-year postpartum.

Maternal health partnerships with:
- Women's Care Consulting: Participated in community baby shower providing education to participants; now participating with Chicago Birthworks Collective
- Melanated Midwives: 6-part education series initiated; 2021 scholarships awarded with ongoing mentorship for scholarship recipients
- EverThrive Illinois: Launched and completed the train-the-trainer presentations with two community-based organizations and 48 individuals participating in the trainings; also scheduled another cohort of presentations that will take place with three additional community-based organizations

Quality Improvement Grant for Chicago Family Health to hire:
- Quality Improvement Specialist to map processes and enrollment into prenatal care; analyze quality improvement barriers; and improve processes and workflows for screenings, immunizations, and prenatal care enrollment
One of the many benefits of Medicaid managed care is that our member health plans can offer additional benefits that go above what is covered under the Illinois Medicaid program.


| Aetna Better Health | • Up to $70 on a rewards card for completing a pregnancy form and postpartum appointments  
|                     | • A free car seat by completing a pregnancy form and keeping one prenatal appointment in the first four months of pregnancy |
| BlueCross BlueShield | • A free car seat or portable crib by keeping one prenatal appointment during the first trimester of pregnancy  
|                     | • Two free packages of diapers for keeping postpartum appointments  
|                     | • A gift card for keeping at least six well child appointments |
| CountyCare Health Plan | • Free packages of diapers for getting regular immunizations (shots)  
|                           | • Up to $300 in rewards cards by keeping prenatal and postpartum appointments and well child appointments  
|                           | • A Safe Sleep Survival Kit with a portable crib by keeping prenatal appointments  
|                           | • A free car seat or booster seat and breast pump |
| Meridian Health Plan | • Up to $100 in gift cards by keeping well child appointments and getting regular immunizations (shots)  
|                       | • A free stroller, playpen, car seat or diapers for keeping prenatal appointments |
| Molina Healthcare | • Up to $180 in gift cards by keeping prenatal and postpartum appointments and well child appointments  
|                     | • A New Mom Baby Box with baby supplies |
In an effort to promote continuity of care and safer birthing options, IAMHP worked to help pass legislation that included reimbursement rate increases for prenatal/postpartum visits and a procedure called external cephalic version (ECVs), which could help curb the increase in c-sections performed.

The new legislation also includes additional reimbursement for other prenatal and perinatal health care services including:

- Comprehensive risk assessments for pregnant women, women with infants, and infants
- Lactation counseling
- Nutrition counseling
- Childbirth support
- Psychosocial counseling
- Treatment and prevention of periodontal disease
- Other support services that have been proven to improve birth outcomes
IAMHP's Focus on Maternal Health

For the second quarter of the year, IAMHP collaborated with our members and industry partners through our weekly podcasts and monthly webinars to highlight the work being done to help improve maternal health outcomes in Illinois.

Webinars:
*How Health Plans are Addressing Maternal Health*
Keeping pregnant people healthy is central to the work of the managed care program as half of all births in Illinois are covered by the Medicaid program. Aetna Better Health will join us to discuss how plans are addressing maternal health.

https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/1066824670643411215

*Maternal Health Disparities - Confronting Racial Inequities*
IAMHP and its member Medicaid health plans are proud to work with our Trusted Partners to address maternal health disparities and improve health outcomes in our communities. Join Dr. Fleming from the Cayaba Care team to discuss community partnerships with organizations and health plans to address racial inequities in maternal health and discuss the importance and impact of community based care.

https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/6819690508385121800

Featured Podcast:
*Understanding the Work of ILPQC and OBGYN’s*
Patricia Ann Lee King, State Project Director and Quality Lead for the Illinois Perinatal Quality Collaborative, joins Sam in this episode to talk about the Collaborative's work in the maternal health space and how they partner with providers to improve maternal health outcomes in Illinois.

Click the episode image below to listen to this episode. To listen to past podcast episodes, visit:
https://iamhp.podbean.com/
IAMHP Maternal Health Toolkit

The Maternal Health Toolkit serves as a guide to partners, providers and Medicaid members on the array of maternal health services offered and covered under the Illinois Medicaid program. In addition to prenatal and postpartum healthcare coverage, this toolkit also offers information on transportation and mental health resources.

The full toolkit is hyperlinked below, or you can click here to access it.
“I love, love, love CountyCare,” said Deanna Chandler, a 39-year-old working mom of four (three boys and one girl) when she reflects upon her health, as well as her children, for the past few years. The Harvey resident has been a CountyCare member since around the time her oldest son, now 20, was born.

“I ended up reading all the options available to me at the time and CountyCare stood up. They cover vision, dental and everything we needed. In addition, they have increasing incentives for the OTC Rewards Card, which comes in handy. We are rewarded for what we are supposed to—being healthy.”

Chandler developed gestational diabetes during her third pregnancy, which later transitioned into type 2 diabetes. Both her mom and dad had a history of diabetes. Her diabetes was uncontrolled and she even had an episode where her vision went out. Luckily, CountyCare’s Care Coordination nurses Camille Haynes and Jackie Webb were there to manage her diabetes and provide the support she and her family needed. “CountyCare has been there for me no matter what, from medications for me and my children to my diabetes needs. They never closed the door on me,” she recalled.

Chandler had a complicated third pregnancy since the baby was born premature, and she underwent two blood transfusions. She was in labor for three days, from Good Friday until her bundle of joy made his debut on Easter day. “It was so worth it. Just to see his pretty face,” she recalled.
Over the years, CountyCare has cared for Chandler and her 4 children, all CountyCare members, through:

- Medication assistance and delivery
- OTC Rewards Card and the ability to get eligible items when most needed
- Sleep Safe Kit (portable crib, pacifier and crib) through the Brighter Beginnings Program
- Diapers
- Annual Book Club
- Transportation services to doctors’ appointments
- Nurses’ home visits for her and the children

Just this past April 29, 2022, Chandler delivered her fourth baby four weeks prior to her due date. “I had the best care,” Chandler remembered. A healthy 6 pounds, 3 ounces and 17 inches of pure love is the newest addition to the family. And diabetes is in the past, now completely managed.

“I am feeling great,” Chandler confessed. “Some mothers have the blues after they deliver a baby, not me. I love being a mom. It’s a blessing for me to be healthy and have the energy for my kids. My children have no diabetes. They are healthy. I am so thankful for CountyCare. I have the best Care Coordination team ever. They are phenomenal. I will never trade it in for anything in the world. They are my extended family.”
The Commonwealth Fund reported in 2020 that the U.S. has the highest maternal mortality rate among the world’s top ten developed nations[1] and data from the CDC shows that maternal mortality in the U.S. has increased by more than 36% in the past year alone[2]. Furthermore, racial disparities in maternal health are stark, with Black women being three times more likely and Indigenous American women being twice as likely to die from pregnancy than their white counterparts.[3]

Medicaid is uniquely positioned to improve maternal health outcomes and disparities with nearly half of all U.S. births financed by Medicaid. Compared to women with private insurance at delivery, Medicaid-enrolled pregnant women are more likely to have had a prior preterm birth and/or a low birthweight baby and to experience certain chronic conditions that put them at higher risk for poor outcomes.[4]

Addressing this maternal health crisis is an effort that requires an integrated approach to social determinants of health (SDOH), economic insecurity, access to care, and quality of care. Illinois’ recent policy decision to become the first state to extend postpartum coverage to 12 months has signaled a commitment to drive change and provide greater support for pregnant women enrolled in Medicaid. Finity, a trusted partner with IAMHP and BEP certified health intelligence company, is prepared to support this effort with its innovative BabySmart program. BabySmart is designed to increase prenatal, postpartum, and well-baby visit compliance, reduce health disparities, and improve health outcomes using Finity’s smart technology combined with doula-certified[5] virtual health coaches who are culturally-matched with the member.

Through Finity’s program, virtual doula-certified health coaches are available to the mothers who need it most. Based on screening criteria that focus on critical aspects of maternal health including health risks, SDOH, and demographic data, BabySmart helps plans identify high-risk mothers and provide them with personal support and education. Beyond doula coaching, all pregnant and postpartum women regardless of risk, are encouraged to participate in BabySmart.

The program leverages robust multimedia engagement and game psychology to attract mothers’ attention and motivate her to earn reward points for completing crucial activities like a maternal health risk assessment, attending checkups, or meeting with their virtual doula coach. Participants can use their reward points to buy healthy, Medicaid-approved items like nursing pillows, diapers, or even blood pressure monitors from a healthy rewards catalog and the items are shipped right to their home, eliminating access issues many mothers face. Members can shop through Finity’s responsive, white-labeled Web portal or call center.

Finity’s member portal doesn’t only allow mothers to shop, it also sets them on a personal LifeTrack that provides targeted resources, videos, and tools for each stage of pregnancy and postpartum. Furthermore, the portal connects mothers with community and health plan resources—everything from food banks to transportation assistance. Participants can access the portal at any time self-service and high-risk members are provided more support to review the available resources with their doula. Because the entire program is designed to be game-like, mothers have fun while participating, which is essential to program success as it motivates them take an active role in their health.

BabySmart can play a key role in helping to reduce racial disparities and address SDOH needs that impact reproductive health for underserved communities. Doula support is increasingly recognized as a promising model to improve maternal and infant health outcomes, member care experience, and health equity. Virtual doula coaches provide a scalable solution. According to research from the NCBI, pregnant women from socially disadvantaged backgrounds that had access to a doula were four times less likely to have a low-birth-weight baby and twice less likely to experience a birth complication than those who did not have a doula.[1] Finity hopes to help broaden access to doulas for underserved mothers and improve maternal health overall by focusing quality care where it counts.

For more information about Finity and our solutions, visit www.Finity.com or contact Trina Milling-Hawkins at thawkins@Finity.com.

[6]https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3647727/#:~:text=Expectant%20mothers%20matched%20with%20a,more%20likely%20to%20initiate%20breastfeeding