



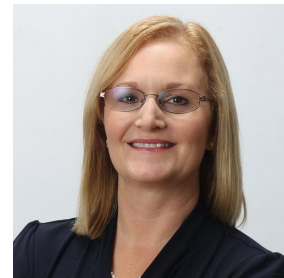
SUMMER 2021 UPDATE

This edition of our newsletter is sponsored by:



Welcome to our Summer 2021 Newsletter!

While it looked as though we had finally turned a corner with the COVID-19 pandemic as cases declined in late spring and early summer, we are unfortunately faced with new challenges due to the arrival of the highly contagious Delta variant and a surge in new cases among the unvaccinated. The COVID-19 vaccines remain readily available to everyone over the age of 12 and continue to be our best defense against the serious and costly side effects of COVID-19, including hospitalization and death. As employers focused on reducing healthcare costs and increasing quality and value, **I encourage you to remain vigilant in serving as “vaccine champions” for your workplaces:**

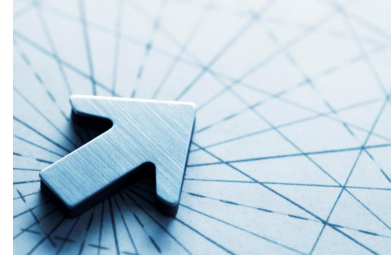


- Continue to inform employees and their family members about the safety, effectiveness, and benefits of vaccination
- Proactively address the myths that continue to circulate in our communities and online, replacing them with scientific facts. The [National Alliance for Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions](#) continues to produce educational materials to support your efforts to address vaccine hesitancy
- Eliminate barriers and make it easy for employees and family members to obtain their vaccines, including time off from work as needed
- Consider incentives to further encourage immunization

In addition to addressing COVID-19, we have a number of other important initiatives to share with you in this issue including:

- The unveiling of our **Employee Benefits**

Advocate Program which evolved from our award-winning Cancer Navigator Program. A partnership with the [Patient Advocate Foundation](#) (PAF), this innovative, employer-based benefit connects employees and their spouses/dependents to trained advocates who guide plan members through a cancer, complex chronic condition or rare disease diagnosis and treatment journey, providing support with benefits education, financial and emotional stress, and access and adherence to care. Learn more below and on our web site: <https://flhealthvalue.org/our-work/breaking-down-barriers-to-care-employee-benefits-advocate-program/>



- Save the date for our **26th Annual “Best of the Best”** event which will be held in-person on November 30, 2021 at Disney’s Contemporary Resort
- A new report from **The Leapfrog Group**
- Employer actions regarding **reducing opioid exposure** after surgery
- Update on our mental health system of care initiative

With all of the challenges of the past year and a half, our mission to drive healthcare quality and affordability through collaboration, innovation, transparency, and action is as critical as it’s ever been. We remain committed to serving as a trusted resource for you and to working together to accelerate positive change. As always, please feel free to reach out to me at any time at karen@flhealthvalue.org or 407-425-9500.

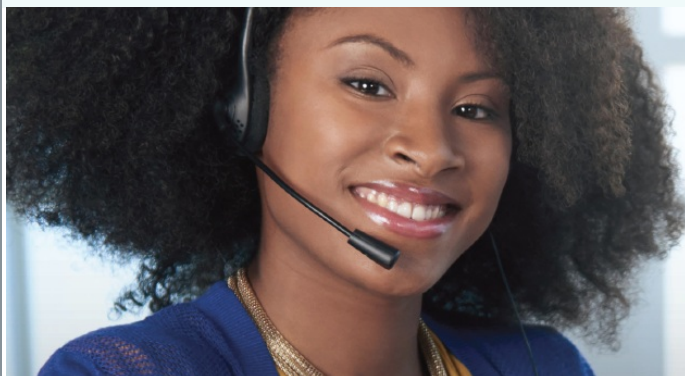
Karen

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The Employee Benefits Advocate Program Has Launched

Expansion of Existing Program Takes on Complex Chronic Conditions and Rare Diseases as a Strategy to Address High-Cost Claimants



**Employee
Benefits
Advocate
Program**

The Florida Alliance Cancer Navigation Program, which has demonstrated positive results since its inception, has been rebranded for a new, expanded focus and is now the Employee Benefits Advocate Program (“EBA Program”). **The expanded focus includes providing services to individuals with complex chronic conditions and rare diseases in addition to cancer and will continue to be implemented in partnership with the Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF).** The vast majority of illnesses, including cancer, are categorized under the broad categories of chronic health and rare disease diagnoses. As with the Cancer Navigation Program, the EBA Program will be offered only to employees, their spouses and/or their dependents enrolled in a participating employer’s sponsored benefits plan. The PAF navigator (now called an “Advocate”) will continue to be thoroughly trained in the employers’ benefits packages to immediately assist with meeting the identified needs of the employee and/or plan member. The Advocate will work to increase understanding of their healthcare and other benefits such as short-term disability and the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) as well as to ensure optimization of the benefits available to them. Guidance also includes making connections to local/community financial and support resources, such as transportation, as well as national resources.



Why did the Florida Alliance decide to expand the program? As we always do, we listened to our members.

- In 2020, the Florida Alliance analyzed reported needs from our employer members and determined that the program should also assist individuals with complex chronic conditions and rare diseases. Many high-cost claimants fall into these categories along with cancer patients, and **the Florida Alliance believes the EBA Program is an effective strategy to address high-cost claimants.**
- We also learned from the April 2020 Milliman Research Report [How do individuals with behavioral health conditions contribute to physical and total healthcare spending?](#) that behavioral health, as a potentially complex chronic condition, must be addressed. According to the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 90% of the nation’s \$3.8 trillion in annual healthcare expenditures are spent on people with chronic and mental health conditions. Six in ten Americans live with at least one chronic disease such as heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and arthritis. Chronic diseases are the leading causes of death and disability in the United States. Depression alone is estimated to cause 200 million lost workdays each year at a cost to employers of \$17 to \$44 billion.
- Conversely, it is estimated that there are currently between 25-30 million people living with a rare disease, with approximately 7,000 known rare disease conditions. There may often be no well-known path for clinical treatment, financial assistance, and local community resources.

Employees, spouses, and/or dependents with these diseases and conditions face unique challenges and need a uniquely qualified Advocate to assist them through their treatment journey.

For more information on the Employee Benefits Advocate Program, please visit <https://employeebenefitsadvocate.org/> or click [here](#) to visit the Florida Alliance website.

If you are interested in learning more about the EBA Program, please contact Karen van Caulil at karen@flhealthvalue.org.

SAVE THE DATE! 26th Annual "Best of the Best"



We are excited to be planning our first in-person event since 2019. Our 26th Annual "Best of the Best" is scheduled for **Tuesday, November 30th from 7:45am - 1:30pm** at **Disney's Contemporary Resort** in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. Look for the agenda and registration opening in August.

We will be continuously monitoring the CDC and state, local, and venue-specific COVID-19 restrictions for guidance on in-person gatherings.

Thank you to our early sponsors!



Sponsorships for this event are available.
Please contact lisa@flhealthvalue.org for information.

The Leapfrog Group's Patient Experience Report *Highlights Need for Better Hospital-Based Communications Around Medications, Discharge Directives and Reporting Errors*

On July 8, 2021, the Leapfrog Group, a national watchdog organization of employers and purchasers focused on healthcare safety and quality, released its Patient Experience Report. [The Patient Experience Report](#) is comprised of learnings from the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) surveys, a compilation of children and adult surveys including the Leapfrog Hospital Survey, Leapfrog Ambulatory Surgery Center (ASC) Survey and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services surveys. The evidence-based and tested surveys are deployed to patients by hospitals

and Ambulatory Surgery Centers throughout the United States, and are focused on experiences in adult inpatient hospitals, hospitals that treat pediatric patients, and facilities that provide same-day surgeries.

According to the report, the Leapfrog analysis of the CAHPS surveys reveals the following areas of concern:



- For children receiving hospital care, too many parents and guardians do not feel comfortable raising concerns about errors. On average, parents or caregivers gave high marks for communications from doctors and nurses to their child (74.8%, 80% respectively) and themselves regarding their child's care (76.5%), as well as communications around their child's medications (80.6%). However, on average only 62% of parents or caregivers reported they felt equipped to prevent mistakes by reporting concerns. As the report notes, "Feeling prepared to speak up immediately when they observe problems is a critical patient safety indicator, improving the odds of preventing or reducing harm from errors."
- Many adult hospital inpatients may not fully understand what they need for the continuation of their care after being discharged from the hospital. On average, 86.9% of patients were provided information on symptoms to be aware of post-hospital release and whether they would have help at home; however of those, only 52.1% of patients indicated they "clearly understood their care transition" upon leaving the hospital, including the purpose of their medications.
- Adult hospital inpatients also did not give high ratings to hospital communications about medications, a critical problem for patient safety, since medication errors are one of the most common dangers patients face in health care settings. Patients reported an approximately 64% satisfaction rate with communications regarding medications, the third lowest rating just ahead of Quietness of the Hospital and understanding their care transition plan.
- Patients were slightly more favorable about ASCs, which had more positive ratings than hospital-based day surgery. Both ASCs and hospital outpatient facilities received similar ratings (97.3%, 96.4% respectively) regarding their treatment by staff and cleanliness of the facility. Patient willingness to recommend either facility to family or friends was higher for ASCs than hospital outpatient facilities, 87.6% and 82.1% respectively.

For more information about the report and the Leapfrog Group, please visit www.leapfroggroup.org.

Newsweek and Leapfrog Group release 2nd Annual List of Best Infection Prevention Products

Many Products Successfully Used in the Fight Against the Spread of COVID-19



On July 13, 2021, Newsweek, in partnership with The Leapfrog Group, released its second annual list of Best Infection Prevention Products highlighting 54 products designed to help patients and healthcare providers avoid infection. According to Newsweek, “Many of these products were successfully utilized in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, lessening the spread of this highly infections contagion.”

Publicly available data is utilized to support inclusion into the list and undergoes expert analysis. Information on products may also be voluntarily submitted to the annual Leapfrog Hospital Survey and the Leapfrog Ambulatory Surgery Center Survey for analysis and inclusion.

The products were evaluated using four criteria:

1. Effectiveness
2. Safety to patients and healthcare workers
3. Successful real-world implementation via published case studies from hospitals and other healthcare facilities
4. Stability of the product’s company to ensure future implementation

There are eight categories of products including disinfection solutions; environmental disinfectants; lighting disinfectants; monitoring systems; “other” (for example, a product for reducing keyboard and mouse cross-contamination); surgical disinfectants; textiles, coverings and compounds; and tubing disinfectants. Products can be searched via category, company, product, or product application or purpose.

A complete listing of the Best Infection Prevention Products can be found [here](#).

The Florida Alliance for Healthcare Value is a Regional Leader for The Leapfrog Group. We encourage our members and others in the Florida healthcare community to take advantage of the resources provided by The Leapfrog Group and participate in the appropriate surveys.

We'd like to invite/remind any ASCs to complete Leapfrog's 2021 ASC survey. Please click [here](#) for more information and access to the survey.



Reducing Opioid Exposure After Surgery

Ensuring Your Employees Have Access to New Non-Opioid Solutions

Opioids After Surgery: A Doorway to Addiction

The opioid epidemic in the United States has reached a state of crisis. In 2020, drug overdoses were linked to more than 90,000 deaths. The surgical setting introduces many people to opioids as a way of treating postoperative pain. Dependence on opioids can happen quickly; prescribed opioids can cause dependence after just 5 days of use. Estimates suggest that greater than 2 million surgical patients become persistent opioid users each year.

The Cost of Opioid Dependence for Employers and Employees

The cost of opioid dependence for employers and employees is staggering. Between 1999 and 2015, the loss of labor due to opioids accounted for nearly \$1.6 trillion in lost economic output (GDP) and 27 billion lost work hours. In 2016, large employers spent \$2.6 billion on treating opioid addiction and overdoses. For employers, the use of postoperative opioids is associated with:

- Higher direct healthcare costs
- Greater utilization of medical services
- Increased length of stay and readmissions due to opioid-related adverse events (ORAEs)



Gaps in Postoperative Pain Management

The first 72 hours following surgery - *when pain is most severe and inflammation highest* - are critical in successfully treating postoperative pain. The goal of postoperative pain management is to reduce the pain and discomfort after surgery while minimizing side effects, but when pain remains after a surgical procedure, opioids are often prescribed. Reducing severe pain is key to reducing opioid consumption. New and emerging treatments may help address the gap in postoperative pain management.

Ensure Access to Innovative Non-Opioid

New non-opioid postoperative pain management drugs are available and in development. However, current payment structures could stand in the way of patient access.

Employers: TAKE ACTION

To ensure your covered population can access non-opioid pain management drugs in the surgical setting:

- Reimburse for innovative non-opioids outside the surgical bundle across all settings of care
- Promote facilities that utilize innovative non-opioid postoperative pain management treatments
- Educate care managers and care navigators about non-opioid options so they can inform patients prior to surgery

- [Educate employees and their families about available non-opioid therapies and how to ask doctors to use them during surgery](#)

To obtain more information on Reducing Opioid Exposure After Surgery, click [here](#).

For information on ZYNRELEF, Heron Therapeutics' new FDA-approved, postoperative pain relief that has been proven to reduce, possibly even eliminate, the need for opioids after surgery, visit www.zynrelef.com.

For additional questions about ZYNRELEF, go to www.heronconnect.com.

ABOUT HERON THERAPEUTICS

Heron Therapeutics' mission is to improve the lives of patients by developing novel, best-in-class treatments to address some of the most important unmet patient needs. They aim to develop patient-focused solutions by applying their innovative science and technologies with well-known pharmacology.

The Path Forward for Mental Health and Substance Use Initiative

Employers Play a Critical Role in Tackling Florida's Mental Health Crisis *The Path Forward Provides an Evidence-Based Market Driven Approach*

Prior to the pandemic, mental health issues and substance use disorders were on the rise. According to the Centers for Disease Control Mental Health in the Workplace issue brief, one in five (18.3% or 44.7 million people) reported having a mental health condition in 2016. **During the pandemic, the number of adults nationally reporting anxiety and depression quadrupled. In Florida, a staggering 63% of adults with a mental health condition will never be seen by a medical professional.** There are several reasons for this gap in care, even for those employees with health insurance: inadequacy in the insurance network, poor participation in the networks, and shortages of licensed clinical professionals leading to long wait times. While the stigma around seeking help for mental health and substance use conditions is lessening, it is also a reason many don't access the help they need. Collectively, we have a call to action to support employees struggling with mental health conditions and substance use disorders.

The National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions, HR Policy Association and American Health Policy Institute, American Psychiatric Association, APA Foundation Center for Workplace Mental Health, Bowman Family Foundation, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, and The Jed Foundation (JED) are overseeing The Path Forward initiative which was developed in response to the growing mental health and substance use crisis. The model is a market driven approach based on 5 priority strategies:

1. Improving network adequacy for mental health and substance use
2. Expanding adoption of the collaborative care model for mental health and substance use in primary care settings
3. Incorporating a measurement-based care model
4. Expanding telebehavioral health and making sure gains that were made during the COVID-19 pandemic continue

5. Ensuring employer-sponsored health plans are compliant with the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act



The Path Forward
for mental health and substance use
Health Equity for all Americans

The Florida Alliance was selected to implement The Path Forward initiative in Florida. While we are in the process of gathering input and developing an implementation model, we are focused on the Federal [Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act](#) (MHPAEA), which is aimed at improving access to affordable mental health care by providing coverage on par with physical health. Although the MHPAEA was enacted in 2008, there is a renewed priority for compliance under the Biden Administration. **The Department of Labor is currently in the process of auditing employer-sponsored health plans for compliance with the Consolidated Appropriations Act enacted in December 2020.** The Act requires employer-sponsored health plans to analyze and provide a written statement detailing how their mental health benefits differ from physical health and other benefits, including treatment limits such as number of covered visits.

A [Self-Compliance Tool](#) for the required analysis and documentation under the MHPAEA has been developed along with additional [guidance](#) from the Department of Labor. Further, a June 17th webinar offered by the National Alliance on the MHPAEA and implications for non-compliance can be found [here](#). To learn more about The Path Forward or the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, please contact [Karen van Caulil](#).

The Florida Alliance can provide guidance to your company in implementing the Path Forward for Mental Health and Substance Use by assessing readiness for MHPAEA compliance and development of contract language to facilitate Path Forward goals, along with incorporating a continuum of care model and measurement-based care indicators.

Member Resources

Here is the latest resource from the Florida Alliance for Healthcare Value and the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions.

New COVID-19 Vaccine video, *Informed Decision-Making*

This new video provides personal experiences and insights of individuals and clinical advisors meant to help the vaccine hesitant make the best informed decision about getting the vaccine that is right for them and their family.



For additional resources, educational information, and other important briefs provided by the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions/Florida Alliance for Healthcare Value, please visit our [website](#).

WELCOME

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Are you interested in sponsoring a newsletter, a webinar, or a future event?
Contact [Lisa Hain](#) for more information.
