



## Weekly Bulletin – March 14, 2025

This Weekly Bulletin is a benefit of your organization's Employer Membership in the Florida Alliance and is meant to **ONLY** be shared within Employer Member organizations unless approval has been given by the Florida Alliance CEO.



### WHAT'S NEW THIS WEEK?

#### Florida Alliance 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors



The Florida Alliance sincerely thanks everyone who attended our 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors on Tuesday, March 4. In last week's *Bulletin*, we introduced the 2025-2026 Board of Directors and their roles, welcomed our newest Board Member, Dawn Hunt of MarineMax, and recognized Kenneth Aldridge of Rosen Hotels & Resorts as a member of the Executive Committee and our new Treasurer/Secretary.

If you missed the Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors or would like to revisit the information presented, please access the link below.

To find the **2024 Annual Report**, slides, and recording of the presentation, click [HERE](#).

Please contact Karen van Caulil at [karen@fihealthvalue.org](mailto:karen@fihealthvalue.org) if you have any questions.

#### National Alliance Press Release on the Mental Health Parity Toolkit

**ACTION REQUIRED: Mental Health Parity Compliance for Employers/Healthcare Purchasers**  
Information and tools to ensure compliance, reduced costs, and a healthier workforce

Employers/healthcare purchasers have a fiduciary responsibility to participants in their employee benefits plans to require their vendor partners to comply with the [Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act \(MHPAEA\)](#), which requires that Mental Health/Substance Use Disorder (MH/SUD) benefits are not more restrictive than Medical/Surgical (M/S) benefits.

**Key Areas of Focus for Employers/Healthcare Purchasers**

- 1. Employers/Healthcare Purchasers Need to Take Action NOW**
  - Employers/healthcare purchaser fiduciary responsibility
  - Department of Labor (DOL)/Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is escalating enforcement
  - DOL/CMS report that most employers/healthcare purchasers are noncompliant in the area of Non-Quantitative Treatment Limits (NQTLs)
  - Do you know how to comply?
- 2. Mental Health Parity Requirements**
  - Three main areas:
    - Financial Requirements (FRs) – e.g., copayments, deductibles...
    - Quantitative Treatment Limits (QTLs) – e.g., # days or visits...
    - NQTLs – e.g., prior authorization, network adequacy, reimbursement rates, exclusions...
  - NQTLs are the most complex to analyze and compare.** The Employers/Healthcare Purchaser Toolkit contains tools for documenting comparative analyses for the most common NQTLs.
- 3. Employer/Healthcare Purchaser Action Checklist**
  - Require your TPA/service providers to complete the [NQTL Multi-Step Comparative Analysis Tool](#) (and embedded MHPA template) specific to your plan information.
  - Document communications with TPA/service providers when requiring them to perform comparative analyses.
  - Talk to your broker, consultant, and/or legal counsel about their ability to review the responses you receive from TPA/service providers.
  - Require TPA/service providers to correct insufficient responses, noncompliant areas, and disparities in outcomes data.
  - Require TPA/service providers to update and have available their comparative analyses annually, especially if new or different NQTLs or programs are implemented (e.g., value-based purchasing, narrow networks...)

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:** This Employers/Purchaser Resource is sponsored by the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions and the [Florida Alliance for Healthcare Value](#). Funding for development of the toolkit was provided by the Community Coalitions Health Institute, which is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, an affiliate of the National Alliance, by the Mental Health Treatment and Research Institute LLC, a tax-exempt subsidiary of The Rowan Family Foundation.

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On Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions released the Mental Health Parity Toolkit that the Florida Alliance developed with them to the public. Florida Alliance President and CEO Karen van Caulil was quoted in the press release that was issued with the toolkit. **“The bottom line is that an employer’s benefit design should not be more limited for mental health and substance use disorder services than it is for physical**

**health,”** said Karen van Caulil, PhD, president and CEO of the Florida Alliance for Healthcare Value. **“Unfortunately, it’s abundantly clear that this is not the case with many health plans across the United States and we see much more restrictive and narrower networks for mental health services.”**

The press release can be accessed [HERE](#).

You can find the toolkit and other resources on our Mental Health Parity Compliance webpage – click [HERE](#)

As a reminder, the toolkit provides a step-by-step guide to help purchasers understand their mental health parity compliance obligations under the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA). It also highlights the accountability of vendors, including carriers, third-party administrators, and managed behavioral health organizations, in meeting these requirements. Among the key resources are Non-Quantitative Treatment Limitations (NQTL) Multi-Step Comparative Analysis Audit Tools, which purchasers can distribute directly to vendors for completion.

The NQTL audit tools offer comprehensive guidance for employers, healthcare purchasers, and third-party advisors/service providers. They include recommendations for properly documenting comparative analyses of Non-Quantitative Treatment Limitations (NQTLs) applied to mental health and substance use disorder benefits in comparison to medical and surgical benefits, ensuring compliance and equitable coverage.

Please contact Karen van Caulil at [karen@flhealthvalue.org](mailto:karen@flhealthvalue.org) if you have any questions.



## WOMEN'S HEALTH

### **Employer Member Benefit: Breastfeeding Support Research Opportunity - Webinar - Wednesday, March 19, 2:00PM – 3:00PM EDT**



While 80 percent of new parents intend to breastfeed, over half indicate that it is too hard for women to access expert help for breastfeeding challenges. 70% of women surveyed feel like their employer does not provide enough support to new families on their breastfeeding journeys.

In Florida, some of the carriers do not include certified lactation consultants as in-network providers which prevents access to this important support for mothers and babies.

Florida Alliance Affiliate Member The Lactation Network is working with the Florida Alliance team to develop a research project that would engage several of our employer members and the carriers they work with to show the positive impact in-network status of these providers would have on mothers and babies. If you are interested in learning more about this initiative, please join us on March 19! You should have received a calendar invitation.

Please reach out to Lisa Hain at [lisa@flhealthvalue.org](mailto:lisa@flhealthvalue.org) if you need the calendar invitation re-sent.

## **80+ Rural Hospitals Stop Delivering Babies: 20 States with Worst Gaps – and Florida is the worst**

*Becker's Healthcare* shared data in a recent article that over the past four years, more than 80 rural hospitals across the country have stopped delivering babies. In the February Report from the Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform, details were displayed for the number of rural hospitals by state that lack maternity care services, those that do offer such services, the financial losses incurred from maternity care and the travel time to the nearest hospital providing obstetrics (OB) services.



**Florida was ranked as the worst state at 91% of our rural hospitals now operating without OB services.**

To view the article from Becker's, click [HERE](#). You will need to create an account to view the article.

To view the article without having to create an account, click [HERE](#). The article will only be available for a short period of time, which is out of our control.

We will be starting a Women's Health Employer Learning Collaborative later this year and maternity care will be a topic we address.

Please contact Ashley Tait-Dinger at [ashley@flhealthvalue.org](mailto:ashley@flhealthvalue.org) if you have any questions.



### **EMPLOYER MEMBER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, REPORTS, RESOURCES AND EMPLOYER LEARNING COLLABORATIVES (ELC)**

## **Employer Member Benefit: OpenNetworks: Direct Contracting Webinar - Monday, March 17, 1:00PM – 2:00PM EDT**



Join us on Monday, March 17 at 1:00PM EDT for an educational webinar on directing contracting. As you may recall, we are acting on our members' responses to a national survey conducted last fall that you are interested in direct contracting with providers to drive value in health care. We conducted a Florida Alliance specific survey in December and January 2025 and the results revealed interest in gaining a better understanding of the different types of direct contracting opportunities available and to clear up any misunderstandings about how direct contracting works and the effort involved in setting it up and managing it.

**Karen van Caulil will share the results of the direct contracting survey and Jeff Hogan, the founder of Upside Health Advisors, will be our featured speaker. He will be joined by Jay Silverstein, the Chief Imagineer at OpenNetworks.**

**We hope you will join us for this important discussion! You have already received a calendar invitation to this Employer Member only webinar. If you have not received the calendar invitation yet, please contact Lisa Hain at [lisa@flhealthvalue.org](mailto:lisa@flhealthvalue.org).**

Please reach out to Karen van Caulil at [karen@flhealthvalue.org](mailto:karen@flhealthvalue.org) if you have any questions.

## Register Today! Florida Alliance 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference – Thursday, May 1 at the Rosen Centre Hotel, Orlando

Thank you to Rosen Hotels & Resorts for their generous support of the Florida Alliance in making the Rosen Centre Hotel venue possible for us.

The Florida Alliance will be presenting the “Most Engaged Employer” Award and the Dr. Jack Mahoney “Healthcare Hero” Award.



### Session Spotlight:



*Shawn Gremminger*

**Shawn Gremminger, MPP, President and CEO, National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions will be speaking on “The Future of Employer-Sponsored Health Insurance: Is There One?”**

In Shawn’s session, you will gain insight into how market distortions and failures affect the commercial health insurance market and the challenges employers face in providing health coverage. He will explain how employers can help restore functional markets for hospitals and prescription drugs, and why proactive purchasing and advocacy for policy change are crucial. Additionally, Shawn will discuss how federal and state policy changes can either support or hinder employers in delivering high-quality, affordable care to employees and plan members.

Click [HERE](#) to view the full agenda and who is speaking in all of the sessions.

### Details of the conference:

- **Date:** Thursday, May 1, 2025
- **Registration and Breakfast:** 8:00AM – 9:00AM EDT
- **Program Time:** 9:00AM – 5:00PM EDT
- **Location:** Rosen Centre Hotel, 9840 International Dr., Orlando, FL 32819
- **Your Member Promo Code:** 2025EMPLOYERAC (Please do not share this code outside your organization. If you have a colleague at an organization that is not a member of the Florida Alliance, please reach out to [Karen@flhealthvalue.org](mailto:Karen@flhealthvalue.org) for a guest code that you can share with them.)
- **Register** [HERE](#)

The Florida Alliance has secured a block of rooms at the Rosen Centre Hotel at a discounted rate of \$163.00 + tax/room. Discounted rooms are available on a first-come, first-served basis until **March 31, 2025**, or until the block has sold out, whichever comes first.



Please contact Lisa Hain at [lisa@flhealthvalue.org](mailto:lisa@flhealthvalue.org) if you have any questions about logistics and registration. If you have any questions about the sessions or speakers, please reach out to Karen van Caulil at [karen@flhealthvalue.org](mailto:karen@flhealthvalue.org).



## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

### **How can we cut wasteful pre-surgery testing? Study shows how to safely reduce blood tests, EKG tests in low-risk patients**

A research team from the University of Michigan (U-M) and Brigham and Women's Hospital published a study in *JAMA Surgery* examining a program designed to reduce unnecessary preoperative testing at U-M Health. The study highlights how hospitals can cut back on unneeded tests while maintaining patient safety. By targeting four common tests in low-risk patients undergoing outpatient procedures, researchers lowered unnecessary testing rates from 37% to 14% and overall testing from 51% to 27%. The initiative, which included clinician education and decision-support tools, ensured that necessary tests were still performed without compromising surgical outcomes.



To read about the study, click [HERE](#) and to read the article on Reducing the Utilization of Low-Value Care, click [HERE](#).

Please contact Karen van Caulil at [karen@flhealthvalue.org](mailto:karen@flhealthvalue.org) if you have any questions.

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