

To: COHBE Board of Directors

From: Adele Work

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Subject: Summary of Joint Advisory Group Meeting to Discuss Out of Pocket Calculator (OOP) Implementation

Date: February 1, 2013



A joint Advisory Group meeting to discuss the pros and cons of implementing an out of pocket cost estimator to aid consumers in the selection of a plan was held on Tuesday, January 22, 2013. Representatives from all advisory groups were invited to participate in the discussion and asked to vote on whether to include the selected tool in the Exchange at go-live or not. This memo provides a summary of the meeting and recommendations.

Background

Based on a significant amount of feedback from stakeholder and focus groups, COHBE staff undertook an activity to identify options to provide an out of pocket (OOP) cost estimator for use by individuals and employees as part of their shopping experience. After careful evaluation, staff selected a health plan cost estimator tool created by Consumers' CHECKBOOK/Center for the Study of Services (CSS) as the best candidate for use by COHBE to meet the October 1, 2013 deadline and provide a useful service to consumers. Before moving ahead with contract negotiation with CSS, the COHBE Board requested input from COHBE Advisory Groups. To address this request, a joint advisory group meeting was held on January 22, 2013. Representatives from the Health Plan Advisory Group, the Individual Experience Advisory Group, the SHOP Advisory Group and the Outreach and Communications Advisory Group participated in the meeting. Representatives from CSS were on the call to answer detailed questions about their product. A summary of advisory group attendees and the vote is provided below.

Summary and Recommendation

The meeting was structured to accommodate a brief presentation, deeper discussion as driven by advisory group members and a vote. Questions and comments fell into the following categories:

- Questions and comments about the tool and the methodology used to determine the costs.
- Questions and comments about the cost of the tool and the impact on COHBE's focus on go-live requirements.
- Comments and concerns on managing expectations about the accuracy of the estimates provided.
- Questions and comments on the user interface including number of questions asked, presentation of results, etc.

A majority of attendees felt that the CSS tool would add value and should be included in the Exchange at go live. 85% of the members attending the meeting indicated that COBHE should proceed with implementing the tool as presented.

Key comments and frequently raised concerns include the following:

- Attendees asked if the tool factored geographic or demographic differentiators (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, education) into the estimation. CSS representatives explained that this tool and the actuarial methodology used do not require that level of detail to provide an accurate relative estimate of total costs. CSS explained that the key factors in estimating costs are age and overall health status. After some discussion, it was generally agreed that careful communication about the purpose of the estimator and the fact that relative costs are represented regardless of geography or demographic factors could mitigate these risks.
- COHBE needs to clearly articulate what data is being captured for the estimator and how to interpret the results.
- Several stakeholders stated that having an OOP cost estimator is critical for go live. Because COHBE is planning on outsourcing the analysis and developing a simple interface for go live, staff stated that the overall increase in work load is manageable. However, impact to COHBE workload and the potential for distraction from the CMS requirements was cited as the reason at least one member chose not to vote for implementing the OOP estimator this year.
- The group recommended that staff develop a long term strategy for providing this capability and minimizing the costs in the long run to avoid potential impacts to our sustainability or adding costs to plans.

Attendance and Vote Summary

Representatives from all 4 advisory groups participated in the joint session. At the end of the session, COHBE staff asked members to vote to include the CSS OOP estimator tool in the Exchange at go-live or to defer inclusion of any OOP estimator until a later release. 85% of the members attending voted to include the CSS OOP tool in the Exchange at go live. The vote was uniformly positive across all advisory groups.

Recommendation

COHBE recommends pursuing the recommendation to begin contract negotiations with CSS for the provision of an out of pocket cost estimator for go-live.