



2025 Performance Improvement Project Snapshot Report

Breast Cancer Screening

March 2026



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1. Background

The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) contracted with Health Services Advisory Group, Inc. (HSAG), a qualified external quality review organization (EQRO), to conduct evaluation and validation of its AHCCCS-mandated performance improvement projects (PIP). HSAG used the Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) publication, *Protocol 1. Validation of Performance Improvement Projects: A Mandatory EQR-Related Activity*, February 2023 (CMS EQR Protocol 1).¹

HSAG's evaluation of the PIP included two key components of the quality improvement (QI) process:

1. HSAG evaluated the technical structure of the PIP to ensure that the Contractor designs, conducts, and reports the PIP in a methodologically sound manner, meeting all State and federal requirements. HSAG's review determines whether the PIP design (e.g., aim statement, population, indicator(s), sampling methods, and data collection methodology) is based on sound methodological principles and could reliably measure outcomes. Successful execution of this component ensures that reported PIP results are accurate and capable of measuring sustained improvement.
2. HSAG evaluated the implementation of the PIP. Once the PIP is designed, a Contractor's effectiveness in improving outcomes depends on the systematic data collection process, analysis of data, and the identification of barriers and subsequent development of relevant interventions. Through this component, HSAG evaluates how well the Contractor improves its rates through implementation of effective processes (i.e., barrier analyses, intervention design, and evaluation of results).

The goal of HSAG's PIP validation was to ensure that AHCCCS and key stakeholders could have confidence that a Contractor executed a methodologically sound improvement project, and any reported improvement was related to and could be reasonably linked to the QI strategies and activities conducted by a Contractor during the PIP.



Methodology

Breast cancer is the most common female cancer in the United States for every major ethnic group, the second most common cause of cancer death in women,² and accounts for 15 percent of all new cancer

¹ Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. *Protocol 1. Validation of Performance Improvement Projects: A Mandatory EQR-Related Activity*, February 2023. Available at: <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/quality-of-care/downloads/2023-eqr-protocols.pdf>. Accessed on: Jan.5, 2026.

² Jemal A, Siegel R, Ward E, et al. Cancer Statistics, 2009. *CA Cancer J Clin.* 2009 Jul-Aug;59(4):225-49. Epub 2009 May 27. Available at: [Cancer Statistics, 2009 - Jemal - 2009 - CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians - Wiley Online Library](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/cncr.25066). Accessed on: Jan. 5, 2026.

diagnoses in the United States.³ Ensuring that all women receive regular breast cancer screening is critically important in disease prevention, early detection, and treatment. In 2019, an estimated 268,600 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed among women.⁴ Breast cancer screening for women is aimed at identifying breast abnormalities as early as possible, and ideally, before warning signs or symptoms are present when the chances of survival are the highest. Approximately one in eight women (13 percent) will be diagnosed with invasive breast cancer in their lifetime, and one in 39 women (3 percent) will die from breast cancer.⁵

Breast cancer is most frequently diagnosed among women ages 55–64 years with the median age of diagnosis at 62 years of age.² While there are other factors that affect a woman's risk of developing breast cancer, age is a primary risk factor. By age 40, the chances are one in 68; by age 50 it becomes one in 43; by age 60, it is one in 29.⁶ Even if breast cancer incidences cannot be substantially reduced for some women who are at high risk for developing the disease, the risk of death from breast cancer can be reduced by regular screenings.



Purpose

For this year's 2025 validation, the Contractors continued this state-mandated clinical PIP topic: *Breast Cancer Screening (BCS)*. The topic addressed CMS' requirements related to quality outcomes—specifically, the quality, timeliness, and accessibility of care and services. This year is the final report for the *Breast Cancer Screening* PIP which will be retired going forward.

The purpose of the *BCS* PIP is to increase the number and percentage of breast cancer screenings. The aim of this PIP is to achieve, through ongoing measurements and interventions, significant improvement sustained over time.



Contractors Reviewed

AHCCCS maintains managed care agreements with several Contractors to administer its Medicaid Managed Care program. A general description of each AHCCCS program and the associated Contractors reviewed are included below.

-
- ³ Howlader N, Noone AM, Krapcho M, Miller D, Brest A, Yu M, Ruhl J, Tatalovich Z, Mariotto A, Lewis DR, Chen HS, Feuer EJ, Cronin KA (eds). SEER Cancer Statistics Review, 1975-2016, National Cancer Institute. Bethesda, MD, https://seer.cancer.gov/csr/1975_2016/, based on November 2018 SEER data submission, posted to the SEER web site, April 2019. Accessed on: Jan. 5, 2026.
 - ⁴ American Cancer Society. Breast Cancer Facts & Figures 2019–2020. Atlanta: American Cancer Society, Inc. 2019. Available at: [Breast Cancer Facts & Figures 2019-2020](#). Accessed on: Jan. 5, 2026.
 - ⁵ Howlader N, Noone AM, Krapcho M, Miller D, Brest A, Yu M, Ruhl J, Tatalovich Z, Mariotto A, Lewis DR, Chen HS, Feuer EJ, Cronin KA (eds). SEER Cancer Statistics Review, 1975-2016, National Cancer Institute. Bethesda, MD, https://seer.cancer.gov/csr/1975_2016/, based on November 2018 SEER data submission, posted to the SEER web site, April 2019. Accessed on: Jan. 5, 2026.
 - ⁶ National Business Group on Health. 2011. "Pathways to Managing Cancer in the Workplace." (May 8, 2012).

Arizona Long Term Care System-Elderly and Physically Disabled (ALTCS-EPD) Program

The ALTCS-EPD Program provides long-term services and supports (LTSS) as well as integrated physical and behavioral health services to eligible members who are elderly and/or have a physical disability.

Table 1-1—ALTCS-EPD Program Contracted MCOs

| ALTCS-EPD Program Contractors | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Contractor Name | Contractor Abbreviation |
| Banner-University Family Care | BUFC LTC |
| Mercy Care | Mercy Care LTC |
| UnitedHealthcare Community Plan | UHCCP LTC |



Population

The population included women, ages 50 to 74, who are continuously enrolled with no more than one gap in enrollment of up to 45 days during the measurement period, in alignment with the associated measure specifications.



Indicator Criteria

The focus of the *BCS* PIP was to increase the number and percentage of breast cancer screenings. The PIP had one Aim statement: *The goal is to demonstrate a statistically significant increase in the number and percentage of women receiving breast cancer screening followed by sustained improvement for one consecutive year.*

Table 1-2 outlines the indicator criteria for the *BCS* PIP.

Table 1-2—Performance Indicator Criteria for *BCS* PIP

| Performance Indicator | Numerator (N) and Denominator (D) |
|---|---|
| The percentage of women 50–74 years of age who had a mammogram to screen for breast cancer. | <p>N—Number of women who had one or more mammograms any time on or between October 1 two years prior to the measurement year and December 31 of the measurement year.*</p> <p>D—The eligible population</p> |

*One or more mammograms any time on or between July 1 two years prior to the measurement year and September 30 of the measurement year for calendar year ending (CYE) 2019 measurement year only.



Data Sources

The PIP was conducted by using administrative data collection methodologies in alignment with the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS[®]) technical specifications. AHCCCS administrative encounter data and Contractor-specific claims were used to identify performance indicator data.



Measurement Periods

For contract year ending (CYE) 2025 validation, the Contractors submitted Remeasurement 3 data for the *BCS* PIP. The measurement period dates for the PIP are listed below. Table 1-3 presents the measurement periods for the *BCS* PIP.

Table 1-3—Measurement Periods for *BCS* PIP

| BCS PIP | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| CYE 2019 | Calendar Year (CY) 2020 | CY 2021 | CY 2022 | CY 2023 | CY 2024 |
| Baseline (10/1/2018– 09/30/2019) | Intervention Year 1 (01/01/2020– 12/31/2020) | Intervention Year 2 (01/01/2021– 12/31/2021) | Remeasurement Year 1 (01/01/2022– 12/31/2022) | Remeasurement Year 2 (01/01/2023– 12/31/2023) | Remeasurement Year 3 (01/01/2024– 12/31/2024) |

Typically, PIPs include one intervention year; however, to account for the impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) public health emergency (PHE), the *BCS* PIP includes two intervention years within its design during which Contractors implemented strategies and interventions to improve performance. CYE 2019 served as the baseline year for most Contractors, except BUFC LTC.⁷ To evaluate performance indicator improvement, the remeasurement years align with CYs; the first remeasurement year is reflective of CY 2022 (January 1, 2022, through December 31, 2022), the second remeasurement year is reflective of CY 2023 (January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023), and the third remeasurement year is reflective of CY 2024 (January 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024).

⁷ In CYE 2019, the BUFC LTC indicator rate had a small denominator, which did not allow reporting of the measure. As such, CY 2020 served as the baseline for BUFC LTC.

2. Performance Summary

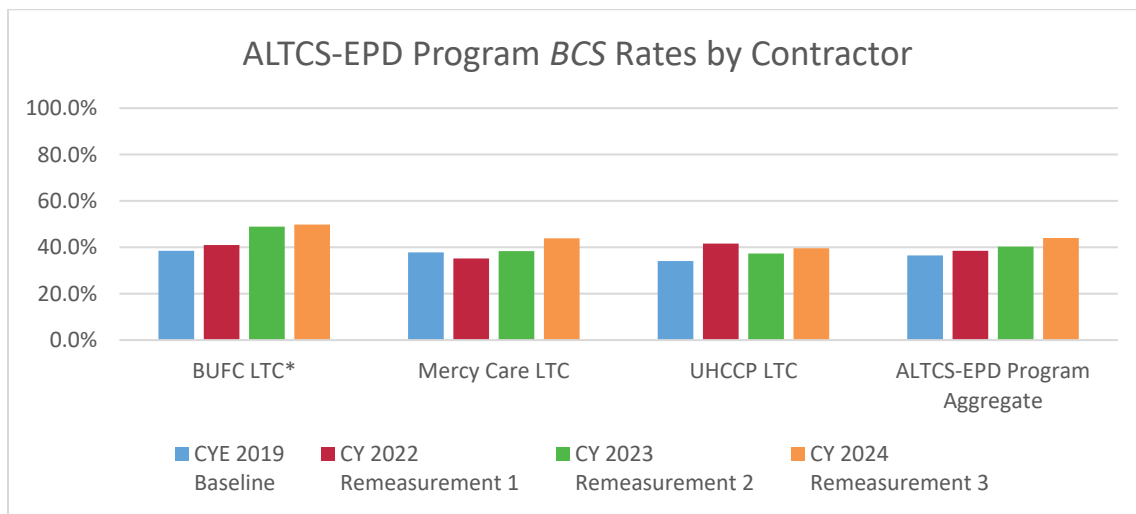


Performance Indicator Results

ALTCS-EPD Program

For each Contractor, the performance indicator results for baseline, Remeasurement 1, Remeasurement 2, and Remeasurement 3 are compared in Figure 2-1 below. Additionally, a table of all performance indicator rates can be found in Appendix B—Performance Indicator Results. To account for the impact of the COVID-19 PHE, this PIP is inclusive of two intervention years.⁸

Figure 2-1—ALTCS-EPD Program BCS PIP—BCS Rates by Contractor



*In CYE 2019, the BUFC LTC performance measure rate for Performance Indicator 1 had a small denominator, which did not allow reporting of the measure. Therefore, the rate above reflects CY 2020 as the baseline period for Performance Indicator 1 for BUFC LTC.

Baseline Results

Contractor BCS rates ranged from a low of 34.1 percent (UHCCP LTC) to a high of 38.5 percent (BUFC LTC). The ALTCS-EPD Program Aggregate baseline rate was 36.5 percent. The baseline rate for two of the three Contractors exceeded the ALTCS-EPD Program Aggregate rate. In CYE 2019, the BUFC LTC

⁸ To account for the impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) public health emergency (PHE), the *Back to Basics* PIP includes two intervention years within its design during which Contractors implemented strategies and interventions to improve performance.

indicator rate had a small denominator, which did not allow reporting of the measure. As such, CY 2020 served as baseline.

Remeasurement 1 Results

Contractor-level indicator rates demonstrated an increase at Remeasurement 1 compared to baseline rates with one exception. As a result, the ALTCS-EPD Program Aggregate rate increased at Remeasurement 1.

Two of the three Contractors showed an increase in the rates between baseline and Remeasurement 1, with a 2.0 percentage point increase for the ALTCS-EPD Program Aggregate rate. UHCCP LTC had a statistically significant 7.5 percentage point increase from 34.1 percent to 41.6 percent, while BUFC LTC⁹ had a non-statistically significant 2.5 percentage point increase from 38.5 percent to 41.0 percent.

Remeasurement 2 Results

All Contractor-level indicator rates demonstrated an increase at Remeasurement 2 compared to baseline rates. As a result, the ALTCS-EPD Program Aggregate rate increased at Remeasurement 2.

All three Contractors showed an increase in the rates between baseline and Remeasurement 2, with a 3.8 percentage point increase for the ALTCS-EPD Program Aggregate rate when compared to the baseline rate. BUFC LTC⁹ had a statistically significant 10.4 percentage point increase, from 38.5 percent to 48.9 percent. Both Mercy Care LTC and UHCCP LTC had non-statistically significant increases over the baseline rate at Remeasurement 2 of 0.6 percentage points and 3.2 percentage points, respectively. UHCCP LTC's statistically significant improvement above the baseline rate achieved at Remeasurement 1 was not sustained at Remeasurement 2.

Remeasurement 3 Results

All Contractor-level indicator rates demonstrated an increase at Remeasurement 3 compared to baseline rates. As a result, the ALTCS-EPD Program Aggregate rate increased at Remeasurement 3.

All three Contractors showed a statistically significant increase in the rates between the baseline and Remeasurement 3, with a 7.5 percentage point increase for the ALTCS-EPD Program Aggregate rate when compared to the baseline rate. At Remeasurement 3, BUFC LTC⁹ and UHCCP LTC sustained the statistically significant increase achieved at Remeasurement 2.



Disparities

⁹ CY 2020 served as the baseline measurement period for BUFC LTC when comparing the baseline rate to the Remeasurement 1, Remeasurement 2, and Remeasurement 3 rates.

AHCCCS requires each of its Contractors to conduct and include subpopulation and disparity analysis findings for the *BCS* PIP. The Contractors must also ensure that interventions are initiated to address specific data analysis findings.

HSAG identified that each Contractor provided evidence that the required subpopulation, disparity analysis, and interventions were present in the *BCS* PIP and submitted for annual validation.

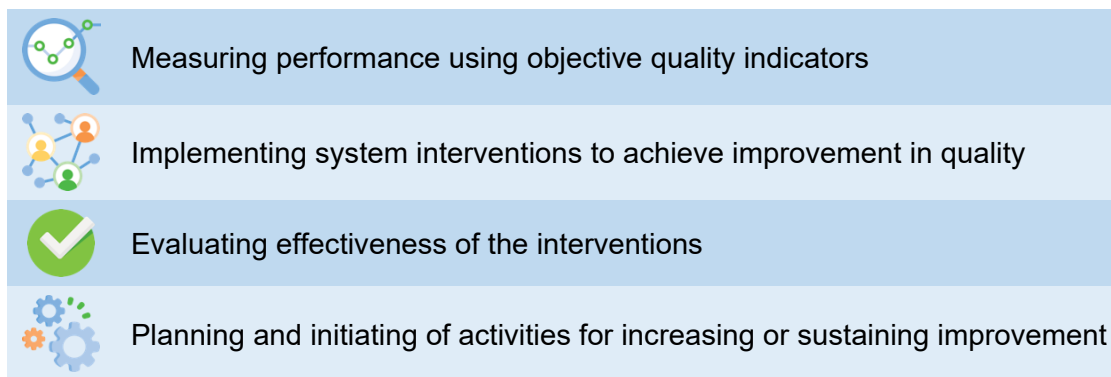


Data Validation

For the project to achieve real improvements in care and for interested parties to have confidence in the reported improvements, the PIPs must be designed, conducted, and reported using sound methodology and must be completed in a reasonable time. This structured method of assessing and improving Contractor processes is expected to have a favorable effect on health outcomes and member satisfaction.

The primary objective of PIP validation is to determine the validity and reliability of a PIP through assessing a Contractor’s compliance with State and federal requirements. For CYE 2025, AHCCCS required Contractors to conduct PIPs in accordance with Title 42 Code of Federal Regulations (42 CFR) §438.330(b)(1) and §438.330(d)(2)(i–iv). In accordance with §438.330(d)(2)(i–iv), each PIP must include:

Figure 2-2—PIP Validation Requirements



HSAG used the AHCCCS PIP Report, which each Contractor completed and submitted to HSAG, for its review and validation. The AHCCCS PIP Report standardizes the process for submitting information regarding PIPs and ensures alignment with the CMS protocol requirements.

HSAG, with AHCCCS’ input and approval, developed a PIP Validation Tool to ensure a uniform validation of the PIPs. Using this tool, HSAG evaluated each of the PIPs according to CMS EQR Protocol 1. The HSAG PIP Team consisted of, at a minimum, an analyst with expertise in statistics, PIP design, and performance improvement processes, and a clinician with expertise in performance improvement processes. CMS EQR Protocol 1 identifies nine steps that should be validated for each PIP. The nine steps included in the PIP Validation Tool are listed below:

Table 2-1—CMS EQR Protocol 1 Steps

| Protocol Steps | |
|----------------|---|
| Step Number | Description |
| 1 | Review the Selected PIP Topic |
| 2 | Review the PIP Aim Statement |
| 3 | Review the Identified PIP Population |
| 4 | Review the Sampling Method |
| 5 | Review the Selected Performance Indicator(s) |
| 6 | Review the Data Collection Procedures |
| 7 | Review the Data Analysis and Interpretation of PIP Results |
| 8 | Assess the Improvement Strategies |
| 9 | Assess the Likelihood that Significant and Sustained Improvement Occurred |

HSAG used the methodology described below to evaluate PIPs conducted by the Contractors to determine PIP validity and to rate the compliance with CMS EQR Protocol 1.

Each required step is evaluated on one or more elements that form a valid PIP. The HSAG PIP Review Team scores each evaluation element within a given step as *Met*, *Partially Met*, *Not Met*, *Not Applicable*, or *Not Assessed*. HSAG designates evaluation elements pivotal to the PIP process as “critical elements.” For a PIP to produce valid and reliable results, all critical elements must be *Met*. Given the importance of critical elements to the scoring methodology, any critical element that receives a *Not Met* score results in an overall rating of *No Confidence* for the PIP. The Contractor is assigned two confidence levels, the overall confidence of adherence to acceptable methodology for all phases of the PIP and the overall confidence that the PIP achieved significant improvement.

In addition to the two overall confidence levels, HSAG assigns the PIP a percentage score for all evaluation elements (including critical elements) for each confidence level. HSAG calculates the percentage scores by dividing the total number of elements scored as *Met* by the total number of elements scored as *Met*, *Partially Met*, and *Not Met* with *Not Assessed* and *Not Applicable* elements removed. HSAG also calculates a critical element percentage score by dividing the total number of critical elements scored as *Met* by the sum of the critical elements scored as *Met*, *Partially Met*, and *Not Met* with *Not Assessed* and *Not Applicable* elements removed. HSAG assessed the PIP’s results for the two confidence levels using the following methods.

1. Overall Confidence of Adherence to Acceptable Methodology for All Phases of the PIP

- *High Confidence*: High confidence in reported PIP results. All critical evaluation elements were *Met*, and 90 to 100 percent of all evaluation elements were *Met* across all steps.
- *Moderate Confidence*: Moderate confidence in reported PIP results. All critical evaluation elements were *Met*, and 80 to 89 percent of all evaluation elements were *Met* across all steps.

- *Low Confidence*: Low confidence in reported PIP results. Across all steps, 65 to 79 percent of all evaluation elements were *Met*; or one or more critical evaluation elements were *Partially Met*.
- *No Confidence*: No confidence in reported PIP results. Across all steps, less than 65 percent of all evaluation elements were *Met*; or one or more critical evaluation elements were *Not Met*.

2. Overall Confidence That the PIP Achieved Significant Improvement

- *High Confidence*: All performance indicators demonstrated *statistically significant* improvement over the baseline.
- *Moderate Confidence*: To receive Moderate Confidence for significant improvement, one of the three scenarios below occurred:
 - All performance indicators demonstrated improvement over the baseline **and** some, but not all performance indicators demonstrated *statistically significant* improvement over the baseline.
 - All performance indicators demonstrated improvement over the baseline **and** none of the performance indicators demonstrated *statistically significant* improvement over the baseline.
 - Some but not all performance indicators demonstrated improvement over baseline **and** some, but not all performance indicators demonstrated *statistically significant* improvement over baseline.
- *Low Confidence*: The remeasurement methodology was not the same as the baseline methodology for at least one performance indicator **or** some, but not all performance indicators demonstrated improvement over the baseline and none of the performance indicators demonstrated *statistically significant* improvement over the baseline.
- *No Confidence*: The remeasurement methodology was not the same as the baseline methodology for all performance indicators **or** none of the performance indicators demonstrated improvement over the baseline.

The Contractors had the opportunity to receive initial PIP validation scores and detailed feedback, request technical assistance and guidance from HSAG, make any necessary corrections, and resubmit the PIP for final validation. HSAG provided the completed validation tools to AHCCCS and the Contractors.



Validation Findings

HSAG’s validation evaluates the technical methods of the PIP (i.e., the design, data analysis, implementation, and outcomes). Based on its review, HSAG determined the overall methodological validity of the PIP. Table 2-2 summarizes the Contractors’ *BCS* PIP validated during the review period with an overall confidence level of *High Confidence*, *Moderate Confidence*, *Low Confidence*, or *No Confidence* for the two required confidence levels identified below. In addition, Table 2-2 displays the percentage score of evaluation elements that received a *Met* validation score, as well as the percentage score of critical elements that received a *Met* validation score. Critical elements are those within the PIP Validation Tool that HSAG has identified as essential for producing a valid and reliable PIP.

Table 2-2 displays the overall confidence levels for the *BCS* PIP for the ALTCS-EPD Program.

Table 2-2—ALTCS-EPD Program *BCS* PIP Overall Confidence Levels

| Contractor | Validation Rating 1 | | | Validation Rating 2 | | |
|----------------|---|---|-------------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------|
| | Overall Confidence of Adherence to Acceptable Methodology for All Phases of the PIP | | | Overall Confidence That the PIP Achieved Significant Improvement | | |
| | Percentage Score of Evaluation Elements <i>Met</i> ¹ | Percentage Score of Critical Elements <i>Met</i> ² | Confidence Level ³ | Percentage Score of Evaluation Elements <i>Met</i> ¹ | Percentage Score of Critical Elements <i>Met</i> ² | Confidence Level ³ |
| BUFC LTC | 100% | 100% | <i>High Confidence</i> | 100% | 100% | <i>High Confidence</i> |
| Mercy Care LTC | 100% | 100% | <i>High Confidence</i> | 100% | 100% | <i>High Confidence</i> |
| UHCCP LTC | 100% | 100% | <i>High Confidence</i> | 100% | 100% | <i>High Confidence</i> |

¹ **Percentage Score of Evaluation Elements *Met***—The percentage score is calculated by dividing the total elements *Met* (critical and non-critical) by the sum of the total elements of all categories (*Met*, *Partially Met*, and *Not Met*).

² **Percentage Score of Critical Elements *Met***—The percentage score of critical elements *Met* is calculated by dividing the total critical elements *Met* by the sum of the critical elements *Met*, *Partially Met*, and *Not Met*.

³ **Confidence Level**— Based on the scores assigned for individual evaluation elements and the confidence level definitions provided in the PIP Validation Tool.

All Contractors adhered to acceptable methodology through all phases of the PIP. BUFC LTC and UHCCP LTC achieved statistically significant improvement between the baseline rate and Remeasurement 3 rate and sustained the statistically significant improvement achieved at Remeasurement 2, resulting in a *High Confidence* level related to achieving significant improvement. Mercy Care LTC achieved statistically significant improvement between the baseline rate and the Remeasurement 3 rate, resulting in a *High Confidence* for achieving significant improvement.



Data Limitations

The following data limitations were noted as part of the AHCCCS *BCS* PIP:

- As of CYE 2020, AHCCCS has transitioned to Contractor-calculated performance measure rates reflective of CY measurement periods for evaluating Contractor performance to support MCO oversight and external quality review (EQR) annual reporting. As such, the baseline measurement period did not use the same 12-month period as the Remeasurement 1 period. The baseline measurement period was October 1, 2019, through September 30, 2020. The Remeasurement 1 measurement period was CY 2022—January 1, 2022, through December 31, 2022.
- CYE 2019 served as the baseline year for most Contractors, except BUFC LTC which used CY 2020 as the baseline year for Performance Indicator 1. In CYE 2019, the BUFC LTC performance indicator rate had a small denominator, which did not allow reporting of the measure; therefore, CY 2020 served as the baseline year.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations



Conclusions

All Contractors adhered to acceptable methodology through all phases of the *BCS* PIP. All three Contractors were able to achieve statistically significant improvement when comparing the baseline rate to the Remeasurement 3 rate. As such, the ALTCS-EPD Program Aggregate rate demonstrated an increase at Remeasurement 3 compared to the baseline rate. At Remeasurement 3, two Contractors sustained the statistically significant improvement achieved at Remeasurement 2 when compared to the baseline rate.



Recommendations

HSAG recommends that the Contractors consider the following for the future PIP selected to replace the *Breast Cancer Screening* PIP:

- Apply lessons learned from the *Breast Cancer Screening* PIP.
- Seek technical assistance from HSAG to understand the CMS EQR Protocol 1 PIP requirements.
- Implement interventions with clearly defined intervention effectiveness measures that are directly linked to the intervention to assess the effectiveness of each intervention.

Appendix A. Acknowledgements and Copyrights

HEDIS[®] refers to the Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set and is a registered trademark of the NCQA.



Appendix B. Performance Indicator Results

ALTCS-EPD Program BCS PIP—BCS Rates by Contractor

| ALTCS-EPD Program BCS Rates by Contractor | | | | |
|---|----------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Contractor | CYE 2019 | CY 2022 Remeasurement 1 | CY 2023 Remeasurement 2 | CY 2024 Remeasurement 3 |
| BUFC LTC* | 38.5% | 41.0% | 48.9% | 49.8% |
| Mercy Care LTC | 37.8% | 35.2% | 38.4% | 43.9% |
| UHCCP LTC | 34.1% | 41.6% | 37.3% | 39.6% |
| ALTCS-EPD Program Aggregate Rate | 36.5% | 38.5% | 40.3% | 44.0% |

HSAG rounded percentages to the first decimal place.

*In CYE 2019, the BUFC LTC performance measure rate for Performance Indicator 1 had a small denominator, which did not allow reporting of the measure. Therefore, the rate above reflects CY 2020 as the baseline period for Performance Indicator 1 for BUFC LTC.