

Questions and Answers (Q&A): Strategies for Health Plans to Support Access to COVID-19 Vaccines for Vulnerable Populations

Participants asked these questions during the April 2021 webinar on strategies for health plans to support access to COVID-19 vaccines for vulnerable populations. We have edited speakers' responses for clarity. The panel discussion recording, slides, and transcript can be found on the Resources for Integrated Care website by clicking the following link:

[Strategies for Health Plans to Support Access to COVID-19 Vaccines for Vulnerable Populations](#)

Featured Speakers:

- Marvin Figueroa, Director, Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Shelly Winston, Division of Part D Policy, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
- Beejadi Mukunda, MD, Medical Director, MyCare Ohio, CareSource
- Jennifer Anadiotis, Director, Integrated Care Post-Acute Strategy, CareSource
- Alex Li, MD, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, L.A. Care Health Plan
- Misty de Lamare, Director of Communications, L.A. Care Health Plan

Q1: How have you adapted your outreach to encourage members to return for the second dose of vaccine, if applicable?

Jennifer Anadiotis, CareSource: Care managers provide direct outreach to our members and remind them of the importance of obtaining their second vaccine. For Medicare-Medicaid Plan (MMP) members who received the first vaccine dose in a nursing facility, case managers assist the member in either returning to the facility to get the second vaccine or in locating a site in the community that offers the same vaccine that the member received for the first dose to ensure the member can be fully vaccinated.

Misty de Lamare, L.A. Care: L.A. Care has established a robust communication plan for outreach to its members, community partners, providers, and public health agencies through comprehensive strategies and tactics that focus on federal and state public health priority tiers. As of April 2021, outreach strategies involved targeting members for the initial dose. In early February, L.A. Care began receiving COVID-19 claims data from regulators for its Medi-Cal (Medicaid) and Medicare product lines. Additionally, L.A. Care pays vaccine administration claims directly for its commercial product lines. This data enables L.A. Care to conduct further analysis to identify and outreach to members that have not been vaccinated and those that are due for their second vaccine, if applicable.

L.A. Care also conducted a training for community health workers that included FAQs about the vaccine and information on the importance of getting two doses by the same vaccine manufacturer, if getting a two-dose vaccine. We recorded this training and will repurpose it for ongoing use, including on our

website and social media. Additionally, an [FAQ](#) on L.A. Care's public website includes encouragement to receive both doses of vaccine, emphasizing the need to follow public health guidelines.

Q2: What do you see as your role in reaching caregivers? Are you helping caregivers get vaccinated?

Misty de Lamare, L.A. Care: Caregivers were among the earliest groups prioritized for vaccination by the state and federal government. In January and February, L.A. Care launched a targeted campaign for L.A. Care's Homecare Workers Health Care Plan (PASC-SEIU) members, who include In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) caregivers and the individuals in their care. Additionally, L.A. Care partnered with the L.A. County Department of Public Health to promote vaccination sites targeting caregivers, and ensured that they can bring their clients with them to get vaccinated regardless of age. The Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, L.A. Care's local county safety-net provider which provides care for a large percentage of L.A. Care's PASC-SEIU members, also conducted a targeted campaign to caregivers and held vaccine clinics.

Beejadi Mukunda, CareSource: CareSource views our members holistically and understands the importance of caregivers, including family or others living within a household, to influence a member's decisions about their healthcare. We are strongly advocating with the state, encouraging them to view the member and household as a unit as it relates to vaccination and allowing vaccination of all members of the household, to ensure that the protection vaccination offers is felt within the family unit.

Jennifer Anadiotis, CareSource: CareSource has created a communication campaign that involves mailings, electronic information, social media, provider and member portal information, and our website to increase awareness of the safety and efficacy of the vaccine as well as providing links to CDC, Ohio Department of Health, and other resources to inform members about the benefits of the vaccine. We have heard through our member advisory councils that CareSource is viewed as a trusted source of information, and we are leveraging multi-channel communications to share information about vaccination and associated resources to help members and non-members alike.

Q3: Can you provide more details on how specifically you have expanded transportation benefits to support vaccination access?

Jennifer Anadiotis, CareSource: CareSource has expanded transportation benefits to reduce transportation barriers that may affect a member's ability to become vaccinated. All MyCare (MMP) members are eligible to receive transportation at no cost to the member to and from both vaccination appointments. Additionally, CareSource extended that benefit to members' caregivers, so that they can accompany the member to the vaccination appointment at no extra cost. Members are encouraged to preschedule their pick up time after the vaccination appointment to reduce wait times, and our transportation vendors have accommodated these trips.

Misty de Lamare, L.A. Care: L.A. Care provides transportation to and from walk-up vaccination sites for its Medi-Cal and Cal MediConnect members. L.A. Care waived the two-day scheduling requirement for transportation to and from walk-up vaccination sites to ensure members who find appointments can access them. This includes transportation to Federally Qualified Health Centers and safety net clinic

vaccine appointments. L.A. Care maintains a comprehensive list of county-wide vaccination sites and ensures that its transportation vendor is prepared to accommodate the increase in volume of transportation requests for COVID-19. Additionally, L.A. Care promotes transportation services for COVID-19 vaccination in its outreach to members.

Q4: How are you planning for vaccination of members who have difficulty leaving their homes?

Alex Li, L.A. Care: L.A. Care has co-led an effort, along with the L.A County Department of Public Health (DPH) and other managed care Medicaid (Medi-Cal) health plans, to formulate a county-wide strategy and approach. We identified 11 willing home health vendors, oriented them to our goals and objectives, and provided them an opportunity to ask process and contractual questions. Our health plan will supply the home health vendors with a curated list of qualified members at home (validated by health plans, geriatricians, and DPH staff); conduct a preliminary outreach to the members and their primary care providers; simplify our authorization process; and leverage the DPH's allocation of Johnson & Johnson vaccine supply to streamline the end-to-end process.

Jennifer Anadiotis, CareSource: CareSource is launching an in-home vaccination program through partnerships with local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and fire departments in select areas of the state and in collaboration with other managed care organizations in Ohio. The goal of the program is to identify and enroll individuals who have difficulty leaving their homes and who want to be vaccinated. EMS and fire personnel will directly contact the members to schedule their vaccination appointments in their home.

Q5: Are you tracking members who initially choose not to receive the vaccine, and, if so, what type of additional outreach is planned for them?

Jennifer Anadiotis, CareSource: CareSource tracks members who have declined the vaccine and when possible, obtains the reason the member declined the vaccine. CareSource uses those reasons to create education for members and to inform our communication campaigns, including social media, newsletters, text/email outreach, print campaigns, and town halls.

CareSource has developed an interactive text campaign in which a member can interact with a persona that best represents their current thoughts around vaccination, including their readiness for vaccination across the spectrum, from ready to sign up to not sure that they will accept the vaccine. Based on the persona, the text campaign provides opportunities for the member to get answers to questions and other concerns to lead to an informed decision about vaccination.

Also, as a part of routine case management activities, case managers discuss COVID-19 vaccinations with members and provide information about how the member can get vaccinated if the member changes his or her mind.

Misty de Lamare, L.A. Care: L.A. Care's COVID-19 vaccine communication plan includes strategies and tactics to communicate key messages about vaccine hesitancy and encourage vaccination when eligible. We are just beginning phase two of our communications plan, which focuses on vaccine hesitancy.

Based upon our research, member surveys, and town halls, which inform L.A. Care about common issues and concerns in our community, we are focused on being a trusted source of truth for our members. This includes being transparent about the vaccines and their side effects, using spokespeople who are from the communities where our members live, and using a variety of communication channels to ensure a wide reach. The COVID-19 Vaccine Member Ambassador Program is an example of leveraging these community spokespersons. L.A. Care launched this program through their Regional Community Advisory Council members, and feature images and quotes on social media of participants who have received the vaccine. We also provide program participants with California Department of Public Health COVID-19 vaccine fact sheets in English and Spanish to distribute in their communities. The team members at our Community Resource Centers, which are located in the communities we are targeting, have also served as spokespersons for the vaccine by conducting direct outreach calls to resource center visitors in order to schedule them and their family members for vaccine appointments at clinics hosted by the centers. L.A. Care also hosts a Facebook Live series in both English and Spanish, offers provider and community health worker trainings, and several speaking opportunities for our medical doctors. We are also in the midst of developing a tracking and monitoring report of our vaccinated members by zip codes, race/ethnicity, gender, and age. This report will allow us to compare vaccine adopters and those hesitant or skeptical across different regions and demographics.