



# Closing the gap

How a strong quality program can boost health outcomes and performance scores

For many benefit plans, a robust quality program is the key to success. High satisfaction and clinical performance – demonstrated via Medicare Star Ratings and HEDIS scores – often indicate you have a successful quality program that connects members to care and delivers better outcomes. Proactive management of chronic care conditions, such as diabetes and the diabetic retinal exam measure, can contribute to that success.

However, lower scores can indicate a gap in care resources and effectiveness – whether it be access to care or patient engagement.

Luckily, there’s plenty of opportunity to improve your quality program and help raise your scores and support member health. The most successful programs use member-focused and measurable tactics that put an emphasis on education, awareness and outreach.



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## Medicare Star Ratings and HEDIS

These systems help the government measure outcomes and experience, including members’ access to care, how well providers support members, and even whether members are getting the preventive care they need<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set"; Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services; [www.cms.gov](http://www.cms.gov); December 2021.



## How Star Ratings and HEDIS scores relate to member health

Star Ratings and HEDIS scores are indicators of a plan's ability to manage its members' overall health, since higher ratings generally mean members have better access to the healthcare they need – and they're actually using it. For example, measuring the percent of members who complete a vision exam can indicate how successful the plan is at connecting members to care.

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) developed the Star Rating system to measure care quality with criteria like patient experience, timeliness of care and a host of clinical measures. Members can check these Star Ratings to compare plans and choose the one that best meets their financial and care performance needs. Generally, the higher the Star Rating, the more successful the plan is at connecting the member with care, and the more effective the plan.<sup>2</sup>

HEDIS (Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Sets) scores cover a broader range of clinical measures, covering more preventive and maintenance care. Similar to Star Ratings, the higher the HEDIS score, the more a member can access the care they need.

<sup>2</sup> "CMS Releases 2022 Medicare Advantage and Part D Star Ratings to Help Medicare Beneficiaries Compare Plans"; Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services; [www.cms.gov](http://www.cms.gov); October 8, 2021.



## Quality programs close the gap

Fortunately, with the right quality programs, gaps in care can be closed effectively. Vision care provides a clear example of an easy way to close the gap. Vision exams can detect a number of serious and chronic illnesses before their symptoms become evident.<sup>3</sup> Diabetes and diabetic retinopathy, hypertension, high cholesterol, thyroid disease and even autoimmune disorders may be clear to eye doctors just by looking into the eye.<sup>3</sup>

But members may not know that – so reminders and communication are critical parts of a strong quality program. Sending targeted communication to remind members to get their comprehensive vision exams can help close the care gap while keeping them healthy.



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### What does a gap in care look like?

If a member diagnosed with diabetes isn't getting a regular vision exam to identify potential diabetic retinopathy, that's a gap in care

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## Strategies for designing an effective quality program



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Early detection and disease management may help keep members healthier for longer<sup>4</sup>

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Education, awareness and outreach are vital for a quality program's success, but how you do it is just as important. When designing outreach materials and considering what to tell members, consider these important questions:

### Are we focusing on our members' goals?

Your program is a success if members complete their necessary health care visits and address any health issues they've uncovered, since early detection and disease management may help keep them healthier for longer.<sup>7</sup>

### Are we meeting our members where they are?

At EyeMed, we've found that it's important to use multiple paths of communication to reach your targeted members. We can leverage phone calls, direct mail, text messaging, email and custom landing pages to get our message across.

- **Phone calls:** EyeMed representatives call members and help them schedule a vision exam appointment over the phone.
- **Direct mail and emails:** Education, awareness, provider options and appointment reminders are all sent via direct mail or email.
- **Text messaging:** frictionless outreach that can connect a member directly to the desired destination through their mobile device.
- **Custom landing pages:** We build pages with information targeted to educate specific members, like diabetics, with links to other tools such as the provider locator to find in-network providers and, potentially, schedule their exams.

### Are we educating our members?

Reaching out isn't enough on its own. Do members understand why screenings and vision exams are important? They may be more likely to take action if they know that eye exams can help identify health issues early, and that early detection may help keep them healthier longer.<sup>4</sup>

### Are the results measurable?

Data is the key to improving performance. By tracking key actions and data points, you can discover which program components are driving HEDIS and Star results. This insight is the basis for continual learning that improves your scores.

## Tried and true quality program tactics

Education and outreach are key components of a successful quality program campaign. To encourage more members to get an annual vision exam, letting them know how easy it can be is a good place to start. Include things like:

- What their provider network coverage is like, including nearby locations
- The discounts and savings they receive through their benefits
- Why it's important for them to get an eye exam. For example, everyone can benefit from an annual vision exam, but members with diabetes may not know they're at a higher risk for diabetic retinopathy – something an eye doctor can recognize and begin treating.<sup>4</sup>

Time and time again, we've seen this education and outreach get members to the care they need. We've tried and tested many different tactics and messaging to build effective quality programs, and education and outreach always rise to the top.

In one instance, EyeMed conducted a calling campaign for a partner, targeting 2,000+ diabetic members who had not completed their vision exam including a retinal assessment. As a result of having a representative scheduling an annual vision exam in real-time with the member:

- 38% of members scheduled a vision exam
- 25% of those 2,000 diabetic members completed their vision exam
- 15% of members who didn't schedule over the phone still completed a vision exam thanks to the reminder

In another instance, EyeMed conducted a quality program that included educational mailers, a call campaign to schedule appointments and digital appointment reminders. In all, 15% of members in need of an annual vision exam scheduled over the phone, and 73% of the members who scheduled an exam kept their appointment.



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### Help diabetic members get access to care they need

Since diabetes can cause overall health and eye complications, diabetic members need more access than most to many types of preventive testing—including vision exams, as conditions like diabetic retinopathy can affect the way people see.<sup>4</sup>

Comprehensive annual vision exams can spot early warning signs so members can seek needed treatment and management – cutting costs for themselves and for you and improving Star Ratings and HEDIS compliance.

As part of a quality program, outreach, awareness and education can make sure your diabetic members know the importance of completing an annual vision exam.

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## Putting it all together

Member-focused, measurable tactics that emphasize education and outreach are best for closing the care gap and increasing compliance scores. When members have access to the care they need – and actually take advantage of it – it’s better for their experience, their health, your quality program and for your plan.

### Want help with your quality program?

We’ve got you covered. EyeMed partners with plans to create and support quality programs that encourage more members to complete their annual eye exams. Just ask your EyeMed sales rep for more information, or visit [eyemed.com](https://eyemed.com).

