

NC Medicaid Managed Care Qualitative Evaluation 2023: Beneficiary Perspectives—Medicaid Managed Care Launch Year 2

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What is the Medicaid Transformation Qualitative Evaluation?

Qualitative interviews with stakeholders (e.g., physician practices, health systems, beneficiaries) are part of a larger multi-year evaluation of North Carolina Medicaid's transition from fee-for-service to Medicaid managed care under the 1115 demonstration waiver. Qualitative interviews and focus groups with Medicaid beneficiaries were conducted to gain the perspective of adult beneficiaries and caregivers of pediatric Medicaid beneficiaries.

How Were Interviews and Focus Groups Conducted?

English and Spanish recruitment flyers were emailed to community organizations, Clinically Integrated Networks (CINs), and physician practices and health systems that had previously been interviewed. Adult beneficiaries and caregivers interested in participating in the study could call a toll-free study phone number or use a QR code to request a return call. Interviews were conducted via Zoom, between February and May of 2023, and typically lasted 20-30 minutes.

Interview Topics



Who Participated in the Interviews?

We conducted one focus group and 21 interviews. The focus group and one interview were in Spanish, and all other interviews were in English. Some participants were adult Medicaid beneficiaries and others were caregivers for a child under 18 on Medicaid. We purposely sampled across language, chronic conditions, years on Medicaid, region, and health plan to ensure diversity in our sample.

Key Takeaways

Results suggest that Medicaid beneficiaries are generally pleased with their managed care plans. Access to care was a challenge reported by approximately one-third of participants. A slightly larger proportion reported difficulty receiving medications, even prescriptions approved prior to managed care, as well as access to specialty providers. More details regarding key findings follow.

Beneficiary Respondent Overview

Participant Characteristics	Total (n = 25)
Beneficiary/Caregiver	
Adult beneficiary	6 (24%)
Caregiver	8 (32%)
Both adult and caregiver	11 (44%)
Primary Language Spanish	5 (20%)
Rural Residence	9 (36%)
Have Chronic Condition(s)	22 (88%)
Number of Years on Medicaid	
Less than 3 years	5 (20%)
3 to 5 years	9 (36%)
More than 5 years	9 (36%)
Unknown	2 (8%)

Selection or Auto-enrollment of Plans

Some participants found information about health plans easy to understand, whereas others found it confusing. Social workers, medical providers, and the Medicaid website and app were identified as useful resources. Most reported receiving letters with plan information and found the letters confusing or lacking sufficient detail.

Language was an important barrier. While one Spanish-speaking participant received a letter in Spanish, others were auto-enrolled because the letters they received were in English, making it difficult for them to understand.

"I don't know what benefits each has, and since they came in English, and I'm not too good at English."

— Spanish-speaking caregiver

Access to Healthcare Services

Most members kept their established PCP and specialists. Eight participants described difficulty accessing specialty services. Nine participants described difficulty getting medications that had been approved prior to managed care.



- ♦ *"I haven't had any lapse. I've been at the same dentist, the same department for mental health, and the same therapist, and the same dermatologist."* (English-speaking adult beneficiary)
- ♦ *"My daughter has been waiting to see somebody in ENT now for almost six months... We've called ENT but they have not gotten the referral from the health plan."* (English-speaking adult beneficiary and caregiver)
- ♦ *"[The health plan] was trying to get him to switch to a different epilepsy medicine. I have already been on it twice. Two different ones that didn't work. So the PCP had to send a letter in for it. It's been about two months and we've been waiting to hear back about it. I have been calling and checking up every week because I'm paying \$108 out of pocket for it."* (English-speaking adult beneficiary and caregiver)
- ♦ *"I actually called the dentist this week to see if I could get my kids scheduled for their next cleaning in July... And she said, 'Oh, well, we're not seeing Medicaid patients.'"* (English-speaking caregiver)

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Care Coordination

Members reported that referrals to specialists were handled well. PCPs helped identify services and specialists that members needed.

Awareness and utilization of community-based resources was varied. Ten participants were aware of community resources and seven had utilized them. None of these 10 participants resided in an area participating in the Healthy Opportunities Pilots. The most common service utilized was transportation, followed by housing assistance. Participants described ease of using transportation services and did not notice much difference from before the transition to managed care.

"Her pediatrician, she always helps me out because she has known her since she was born. She helps me with things that could benefit my daughter." (Spanish-speaking caregiver)

Satisfaction with Plan and Suggested Improvements

Most interviewees (22) were either highly satisfied or satisfied with the plan and Medicaid overall. Three were dissatisfied with their plans. Those three had issues with accessing care and medications.

- ♦ *"I'm satisfied because it's meeting all of our needs now. So I don't have any complaints. I'm not dissatisfied. I'm still grateful that both of us have insurance and just that her one medicine is \$10 and it used to be free."* (English-speaking adult beneficiary and caregiver)



- ♦ *"I wish I could afford to pay for my own HMO plan because I feel like Medicaid took a drastic change. And then it kind of like dwindled down to not being helpful and giving me the bare minimum. And it was like, oh man, I wish I had the original Medicaid."* (English-speaking caregiver)

"In my case, I have a child with a neurological disability. It would be good to have those resources in the future where parents who have a child with a neurological condition, such as ADHD, ADD, or Autism, have more support to find more resources where we can go, request support, request help—therapists, and counselors."

— Spanish-speaking caregiver

To learn more about the multi-year NC Medicaid 1115 Waiver Evaluation, go to shepscenter.unc.edu.