

## Pharmacy Benefit Contract Renewal

National CooperativeRx renews with CVS Caremark for high quality and lower costs, page 3.

## Annual Health Fairs

Appreciation for the Annual Coalition Health Fairs continues to increase, page 4.

## Proven Health Care Cost Reduction Through Strength in Numbers



## COALITION PRODUCT LINE-UP OFFERS QUALITY CARE AND COST SAVINGS

For 25 years now the Pacific Health Coalition has been helping member health plans control costs with a growing array of services and health care benefits. The savings come from our ability to negotiate better pricing than the plans could achieve on their own. The quality comes from collaborating with top-notch providers.

Led by a Board of Directors comprised of representatives from each member health plan, the Coalition is guided by members' needs. "Two of our most popular services right now are the annual

Health Fairs (see story, p. 4) and the Coalition Health Centers," said Pat Shier, the Coalition's Alaska membership representative. "And, as you would expect, members are concerned about cost and their ability to control their health plan services."

Here is a summary of how the Coalition is working with members to address those concerns with services and benefits that meet their needs.

### Services that Save Your Plan Money

- **PPO agreements negotiated by the Coalition** give member health plans access to high-quality medical care at Alaska Regional

Hospital (Anchorage), Mat-Su Regional Medical Center (Palmer), as well as specialty care at Chugach Physical Therapy, Alaska Hand Rehabilitation, and Ascension Physical Therapy (all Anchorage). Our newest PPO agreement is with the Anchorage Fracture & Orthopedic Clinic / Alaska Medical Alliance, LLC. (See "New PPO Delivers...", p. 2.)

- **Aetna Joint Claim**

**Administration** expands the reach of member plans nationwide through Aetna's network of PPO providers. Aetna handles provider services and care management, while your plan's third-party administrator continues to provide member services, such as benefits determination, eligibility, and explanation of benefits (EOBs).

- **Pharmacy benefits management (PBM) services** deliver volume discounts and significant savings on prescription drugs through CVS Caremark. You also benefit from the Coalition's membership in National CooperativeRx, which provides independent program oversight including audits, contract negotiation, and objective clinical and PBM expertise.

- **Renalogic**, a dialysis cost containment company, uses a customized usual-and-reasonable-rate approach to re-price claims and save health plans money when members need this life-saving, yet costly, service. (See below for a description of Renalogic's chronic kidney disease management services.) (cont'd, p. 2)

# COALITION PRODUCT LINE-UP OFFERS QUALITY CARE AND COST SAVINGS

(cont'd from p. 1)

- **A credit balance service** helps ensure your plan pays the correct amount on claims submitted by hospitals, insurance companies, and commercial payers of health care benefits. Our provider, Optum, bases its fees on a percentage of the savings your plan achieves.

## Services that Deliver High Quality at Low Cost

- **Annual Health Fairs** organized by the Coalition are one of the benefits individual plan participants appreciate the most. (See story, p. 4.) The Health Fairs offer a one-stop opportunity for your plan participants to receive flu shots and comprehensive lab screenings that include a blood draw, prostate-specific antigen testing, thyroid testing and other preventive care services.
- **The Coalition Health Centers**, now open on the Alaska Regional Hospital campus in Anchorage and in the Ridgeview Business Park in Fairbanks, deliver a range of care options and low office visit costs during extended office hours in convenient locations.
- **Wellness and health center providers** give plan participants low-cost options for preventive and acute care, unexpected illnesses and minor injuries at the Coalition Health Centers, Medical Park Family Care, and Wasilla Medical Clinic.
- **The Geneva Woods Birth Center** offers a range of labor and delivery alternatives to low risk women and their families.

- **Surgery benefits** through BridgeHealth can lower both the cost of surgical procedures and the administrative burden for participating plans.

## NEW PPO DELIVERS DISCOUNTED ORTHOPEDIC SERVICES

Beginning in fall 2018, member plans in Alaska and their participants can realize significant savings for orthopedic services provided through the Anchorage Fracture & Orthopedic Clinic/Alaska Medical Alliance, LLC (AFOC/AMA). Learn more by contacting Fred Brown at [fred.brown@phcoalition.org](mailto:fred.brown@phcoalition.org) or Brandon Ousley with AFOC/AMA at [bousley@afoc.com](mailto:bousley@afoc.com).

BridgeHealth bundles costs and negotiates fixed rates for high-dollar, non-urgent surgeries at its 106 Centers of Excellence nationwide. It also coordinates pre- and post-op care.

- **Hearing and vision plans** deliver two vital, but often overlooked specialty services. EPIC provides a complete range of hearing aids and hearing-related services at discounted prices. Eye exams, lenses, frames and contact lenses are available at discounted prices through VSP.

- **Disease management services** (through Optum and Renalogic) give plan participants up-to-date information and one-on-one guidance to manage chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart failure, chronic artery disease, COPD, musculoskeletal pain and chronic kidney disease.

## Resolutions for 2019

Taking its lead from what Executive Director Fred Brown, Pat Shier, and Washington Membership Representative Randy Scott have heard from members, the Coalition's Board of Directors will look at how to continue meeting members' needs in 2019. One topic being discussed is expanded access to the Coalition Health Centers.

"Notably, we know that member plans in Alaska are concerned about the prospect of a State of Alaska Health Care Authority," said Shier. "We continue to monitor this situation and remain active in opposing the loss of control of the health plan services this would represent for our members."

If you have other ideas about how the Coalition can continue to improve its services, contact:

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## CVS Caremark Contract Renewal Focuses on Cost and Quality

Following a comprehensive RFP (request for proposal) process that assessed 10 pharmacy benefit managers (PBM), National CooperativeRx (NCRx) chose to remain with CVS Caremark for another three-year contract.

“We are fortunate to have NCRx on our side to negotiate superior pricing and monitor our participation in PBM programs,” said Fred Brown, the Coalition’s executive director. “And while price is important, it is not the only factor. We are working with NCRx and others to make sure CVS Caremark addresses other concerns and objectives.”

### Negotiations Deliver Improved Service

Deb Thomsen, NCRx vice president of Coalition Development, notes that the RFP process allows NCRx “to negotiate the best price and service for our members. As part of that process, we get to ask tough questions not only related to price, but also to factors that are equally important to members.”

Thomsen cited three examples: “Two NCRx clinicians are working with CVS Caremark to

review high-dollar claims and vet formularies. We also have a new tool that allows us to log and track member issues directly in the CVS Caremark system to streamline customer service. And, we are promoting the exclusion of specific high-cost, low-value medications and medical devices.”

### Shortcomings Offer Opportunities to Improve

As a member of the Washington Health Alliance (WHA), the Coalition recently received a copy of WHA’s 2018 PBM Quality Assessment, in which CVS Caremark scored well in areas including specialty pharmaceuticals management and chronic illness management. Areas for improvement include overall pricing, and tobacco and obesity medications.

“The purchasing power of NCRx eliminates any concerns related to overall pricing with CVS Caremark; however, we see this as an opportunity to work with CVS Caremark and NCRx to improve coverage and ensure alignment with our respective goals,” said Brown. ☐

## CALENDAR

### NATIONAL COOPERATIVERx AND THE PHC ANNUAL MEETING

April 2 and 3, 2019

Hotel Captain Cook  
Anchorage, Alaska

Reception:

April 2, starting at 6:00 p.m.

Annual Business Meeting:

April 3 at 8:00 a.m.

### THE PACIFIC HEALTH COALITION QUARTERLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

June 19

September 26

November 20 ☐



### International Foundation of Employee Benefits (IFEBC) 65th Annual Employee Benefits Conference

October 20 – 23, 2019

San Diego, California ☐







3000 A Street, Suite 300  
Anchorage, AK 99503

## READ ABOUT COALITION PRODUCT LINE-UP OFFERS QUALITY CARE AND COST SAVINGS, P. 1.

*Since 1994, the Pacific Health Coalition (aka HCCMCA) has been helping member health plans control health care costs by negotiating better pricing on health benefits and services than these same plans could achieve on their own. Current member health plans include 27 headquartered in Alaska and 19 headquartered in the Pacific Northwest.*

## ANNUAL HEALTH FAIRS

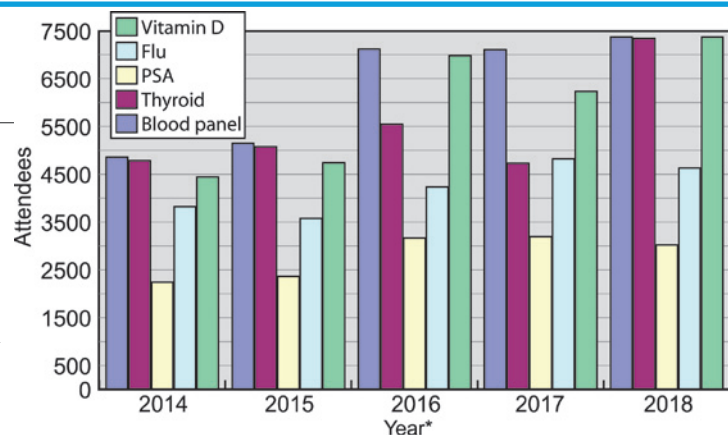
### *Just Keep Getting Better*

Appreciation for the Annual Coalition Health Fairs just keeps growing: “Fast, efficient. Pleasant, staffed by upbeat professionals. You just keep getting better, thanks!” was the review from one participant in Fairbanks.

In 2018, the number of locations grew to 11: five in Alaska and six in Washington. Pre-registration—now required at all locations—grew 3% over 2017. The positive results of pre-registration were apparent in the post-event surveys, with respondents praising the smooth flow, efficiency, and good coordination.

Unlike previous years, Vitamin D and thyroid testing were included in the comprehensive blood draw - along blood chemistry/hemoglobin - resulting in an increase of 18% and 55% respectively for those tests. In another change, PSA tests were administered only to men age 40 and older, in accordance with current standards. And a 4% decline in flu shots is likely attributable to people getting the vaccine earlier in other settings.

The surveys also support the importance of making the Health



Fairs an enjoyable, family-oriented event. One first-time attendee appreciated the “useful health information and helpful representatives.” A repeat customer noted that, “Coming year after year has provided a better image of my health than a doctor’s visit: I see the results.”

Mindful of the adage that “an apple a day keeps the doctor away,” one survey respondent concluded her comments by adding, “Thanks for the apples!” □