



Date: August 19, 2016
Title: Network Breadth Pilot
Subject: CMS Bulletin on Network Breadth Information for Qualified Health Plans on Healthcare.gov

I. Purpose

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is releasing this bulletin to announce that, during the open enrollment period for the 2017 coverage year, information on the relative size of provider networks will display for plans in a limited number of states on Healthcare.gov. The consumer experience is a priority for CMS, and the goal of the network breadth pilot is to help CMS understand how consumers make use of the network breadth information.

II. Background

In March 2016, CMS published the 2017 HHS Notice of Benefit and Payment Parameters final rule (81 FR 12204), which included a new policy to provide additional transparency regarding breadth of provider networks at the county level for consumers choosing a plan on Healthcare.gov. CMS provided additional detail about the methodology used to calculate the network breadth ratings for each plan in the Final 2017 Annual Letter to Issuers in the Federally-facilitated Marketplaces (FFM)¹. CMS indicated it would consider how to display this breadth information as consumer testing continued.

III. Details of the Pilot

During open enrollment, consumers will see information classifying the relative breadth of the plans' provider networks, as compared to other Marketplace plans in the county. Consumers will be able to compare networks for three provider types, including adult primary care providers, pediatricians, and hospitals. As described in the 2017 Letter to Issuers, the network breadth ratings will be calculated for each qualified health plan (QHP) issuer using data submitted to CMS as part of its 2017 QHP Application. QHP issuers in the Marketplaces in the pilot states will receive information about their network breadth classifications from CMS prior to open enrollment. For Plan Year 2017, network breadth information will display for only the pilot states.

¹ The Final 2017 Annual Letter to Issuers in the Federally-facilitated Marketplaces (FFM) (February 29, 2016) is available at: <https://www.cms.gov/CCIIO/Resources/Regulations-and-Guidance/Downloads/Final-2017-Letter-to-Issuers-2-29-16.pdf>

CMS is considering approximately six states for the pilot. CMS is considering states that provide a sample of plans in geographic areas with a range of network availability. This pilot applies to QHPs on the FFMs, including FFMs where the state performs plan management functions. Network breadth information will display to consumers shopping for plans in the individual market only in the pilot states.

CMS will collect data on the 2017 consumer experience from the consumers in the states in which this information will be displayed and use it to inform the Healthcare.gov display in future years. CMS will consider expanding the network breadth pilot to additional states and/or provider types in future years. During the 2017 open enrollment period, we plan to continue to test consumer use and experience on Healthcare.gov to enhance and improve the display of QHP network breadth information.