**Advocacy News**

**Advocacy Action**

**Obesity Community Comments on State Exchange Benchmark Plan Selection for Determining Essential Health Benefits Package**

*by Chris Gallagher, OAC Policy Consultant*

In August, the OAC joined with other leading groups from the obesity community (American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery [ASMB], The Obesity Society [TOS], The American Society of Bariatric Physicians [ASBP] and Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics [A.N.D.]) in submitting joint comments to a number of states, which are in the process of choosing a benchmark health plan to determine the scope of their essential health benefits (EHB) package.

In the wake of this summer’s Supreme Court ruling on the Affordable Care Act, many states have jumped started this process which entails the state choosing one plan for its benchmark from either the:

- Three largest small group plans
- Three largest state employee plans
- Largest commercial HMO plan
- Three Federal Employees Health Benefits plans

Therefore, many states are soliciting public comment from stakeholder groups (such as the OAC) regarding which health plan would be the best choice for the state to select - based on balancing coverage and cost. Throughout the last month, the obesity community delivered comments on this critical issue to state policymakers in Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky, Maryland, Nebraska, New Mexico, Nevada, New York, Rhode Island, Tennessee and Utah.

Each of these state-specific comment letters were based on significant research by the leadership of OAC, TOS, ASBP, ASMBS and A.N.D. to determine which health plan provides the best coverage of obesity treatment services.

In the comments, the obesity community urges policymakers to recognize that:

> “Similar to many other medical conditions, obesity is a complex, multifactorial chronic disease, which requires a multidisciplinary treatment approach. This approach must encompass the best standards of care, both in terms of the treatments chosen, and the care coordination and clinical environment in which they are delivered...and just as those affected by heart disease receive their care through a coordinated multidisciplinary treatment team, those affected by obesity should also follow a similar continuum of coordinated care. Because of the complex nature of obesity and its variety of impacts on both physical and mental health, effective treatment requires the coordinated efforts of providers from several disciplines and professions (both physician and non-physician) within both of these treatment areas.”

As you can see, the obesity community feels it is very important that the disease of obesity be treated just like any other disease state.

For more information about open public comment periods in your state, please contact OAC Policy Consultant Chris Gallagher at chris@potomaccurrents.com. To view the comments submitted to date, please visit www.obesityaction.org.
Membership Application

OAC Membership Categories
(select one)

- Individual Membership: $20/year
- Institutional Membership: $500/year
- Chairman’s Council Membership: $1,000+/year

OAC Membership Add-ons
(optional, but only accessible by OAC members)

Add-on 1: Educational Resources
To order bulk copies of OAC resources, members can purchase educational packages. If you’d like to order resources, select one of the below packages.

- Standard Package
  10-50 pieces/quarter $50
- Deluxe Package
  51-100 pieces/quarter $100
- Premium Package
  101-250 pieces/quarter $150

Add-on 2: Make a General Donation
Make a tax-deductible donation to the OAC when joining as a member. Your donation helps the OAC’s educational and advocacy efforts.

- $5
- $10
- $25
- $50
- $100
- Other ________

Membership/Add-on Totals:

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TOTAL MEMBERSHIP PAYMENT: $______

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Name: ____________________________
Address: ____________________________
City: _______________ State: ___ Zip: _____________
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Payment Information

- Check (payable to the OAC) for $______.
- Credit card for my TOTAL membership payment of $______:
  - Discover®
  - Visa®
  - MasterCard®
  - Amex®

Credit Card Number: ____________________________
Expiration Date: _________ Billing Zip Code: _________

Building a Coalition of those Affected

The OAC is the ONLY non-profit organization whose sole focus is helping those affected by obesity. The OAC is a great place to turn if you are looking for a way to get involved and give back to the cause of obesity.

There are a variety of ways that you can make a difference, but the first-step is to become an OAC Member. The great thing about OAC membership is that you can be as involved as you would like. Simply being a member contributes to the cause of obesity.

Why YOU Should Become an OAC Member

Quite simply, because the voice of those affected needs to be built! The OAC not only provides valuable public education on obesity, but we also conduct a variety of advocacy efforts. With advocacy, our voice must be strong. And, membership is what gives the OAC its strong voice.

Benefits to Individual Membership

- Official welcome letter and membership card
- Annual subscription to the OAC’s publication, Your Weight Matters Magazine
- Subscriptions to the OAC Members Make a Difference and Obesity Action Alert monthly e-newsletters
- “Bias Buster” Alerts, alerting specifically to issues of weight bias
- Immediate Advocacy Alerts on urgent advocacy issues and access to the OAC’s expert advocacy team
- Ability to lend your voice to the cause