

Care Comparison Tool Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is the BCBSNM Care Comparison tool?**

As part of our health care transparency initiative, BCBSNM has developed a Care Comparison tool as a means to disclose price ranges for common services at specified area hospitals, ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs) and free-standing radiology (FSR) centers for inpatient and outpatient services. This easy-to-read tool will allow members to review and compare total treatment costs, both professional and facility combined, for a number of procedures performed at these designated facilities in the BCBSNM provider network.

2. **Why is BCBSNM implementing a Transparency Program?**

We believe an educated consumer will make better health care decisions. Greater health care transparency means providing increased detail about health care trends, allowing members to make informed decisions when choosing common medical tests, procedures and other services.

BCBSNM has already begun to implement several elements of transparency, including physician information, by creating the Provider Finder[®] tool that allows members to search for a physician by name, location, specialty or hospital affiliation. This tool also makes more physician demographic information available, including languages spoken, education, gender and board certification, so that members can select the right physicians to meet their needs.

We also have a Hospital Comparison Tool available on our Web site that lets customers research and compare individual hospital outcome data for more than 100 specific diagnoses, procedures and hospital performance factors such as mortality, length-of-stay, complications, and how frequently a hospital performs specific procedures. We recommend that our members discuss the Hospital Comparison Tool search results with their physician before making any treatment decisions.

3. **Is cost the only factor being considered in the Care Comparison tool?**

No. The volume of services performed is also being presented.

4. **What types of procedures can I find on the Care Comparison tool? What procedures are not included?**

The Care Comparison tool includes common medical tests, and both inpatient and outpatient procedures. Services provided in an Urgent Care Center or Emergency Room are not included. Additionally, procedures related to cancer or transplant services are not included.

5. **Why did BCBSNM select only certain procedures for comparison?**

The selection was made to track commonly billed high-volume, non-emergency elective procedures at area facilities.

6. **How is BCBSNM obtaining the data for this tool?**

The Care Comparison tool will incorporate cost of care data pulled from the BCBSNM claims system. Each facility is asked to supply us with the volume of procedures and services performed at their facility for all payers* in 2008. A Care Comparison Data Collection Form is available in the "News and Updates" section of our Provider Web site at www.bcbnsnm.com/provider. All data must be submitted via this online form by **June 26, 2009**. All data received will be included within the online Care Comparison tool that will be made available to our members as early as Sept. 1, 2009.

7. **What if my facility did not perform a high volume of some of the procedures listed?**
If there is a procedure for which your facility had a low volume (less than 10) for the designated time period, the following indicator will be listed in the Minimum Typical price field: "Insufficient procedure volume to support reporting."
8. **How often will the Care Comparison tool be updated?**
Providers will have the opportunity to update the number of services every six months. Cost estimates will also be updated every six months.
9. **When will the data be available to members?**
We expect to be able to post the Care Comparison tool on our Web site as early as Sept. 1, 2009.
10. **How is BCBSNM informing members about the tool?**
Members already use the Hospital Comparison Tool on our Web site. The new cost and volume information will be merged into this existing tool, and then renamed the Care Comparison tool in all locations where it is referenced currently. Members will continue to be updated on this and other BCBSNM initiatives via member flyers, employer group benefit newsletters and Blue Access[®] for Members (BAM).
11. **How does BCBSNM expect members to use this information?**
When members are deciding on the health care services they need, and the facilities to perform these services, we expect them to use the Care Comparison tool as a guide before making a choice.
12. **Who will be able to access the Care Comparison tool?**
Both members and participating providers will be able to view the Care Comparison tool through our Web site.
13. **Can providers appeal information that is posted within the Care Comparison tool?**
No. There is no appeal process. We are not at liberty to modify the methodology. Because we will be pulling the data right out of the BCBSNM claims file, we feel that the information (a range of costs for both facility and professional services combined) will accurately reflect your experience. The all payer procedure count will be either updated directly by you every six months via the Web site, or will be provided directly from publicly reported sources.
14. **Where can providers find the BCBSNM Care Comparison tool?**
At this time the Care Comparison tool is scheduled to be available on our Web site as early as Sept. 1, 2009. Please continue to visit the "News and Updates section of our Provider Web site at www.bcbsnm.com/provider for updates and additional information.
15. **Whom do we call if we have any questions?**
If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the Care Comparison tool, please contact the Network Services Department at (505) 837-8800 or (800) 567-8540.

**Medicare, commercial insurance, self-pay, etc.*