

Insurance Reimbursement for Circle of Life Health & Wellness Coaching Program: St. Charles Medical Center

Decreased health care costs by 57%

Note from Deb Harris RN & Dr. Michael Harris, Medical Director of St. Charles Medical Center, Bend Oregon 2004

We received insurance reimbursement for our Circle of Life program which we renamed "Medical Symptom Reduction Program", and later it was known as "New Directions."

The CPT code we billed under was for a physician led group education. **Our biggest contract though was with an insurance company who ran a pilot with us for 2 years and found their members who completed the program decreased their utilization of healthcare benefits by 57%.** So other insurance's followed their decision to cover.

The insurance's that covered us were LifeWise (a regional provider here in the NW and are the ones who did the pilot), Clear Choice (also regional), Liberty, Pacific Source, Providence, SAIF, OHP, and Liberty. Our local teacher's plan also covered. It took constant discussion and providing information for each case but was usually a win in the end. Our program fee was \$900.00 for the ten weeks.

We did use a very strict medical model that allowed this. We not only had a physician as co-facilitator, but it had to be on sight at a medical institution. He did have to review and sign off on all charts each week. Also, we kept very strict records of weekly assessments. These included record of blood pressure, weight and then a self-assessment of all body systems. Neuro, respiratory, cardiovascular, etc....This allowed us to track improvements.

We also tracked cholesterol and blood glucose levels before and after the program. Also, please keep in mind the patients in our groups usually had Multi-system involvement: diabetes, heart disease, obesity, as well as many psychosocial symptoms.

This strict medical model is what allowed us the full reimbursement (we had to send cc of each weeks assessment to the case manager at the insurance company) as well as physician buy in for on going referrals. Thus, it required 2 full time positions to pull off: Deb Harris, RN, my assistant, and Michael Harris, MD, part time. We also had to have a representative from the Leadership Council at the hospital for organizational oversight and reporting.

It was very successful and we managed to run 3 classes a year for almost 8 years in this small community. Eventually of course we hit market saturation but our run was good and we did get reimbursed.