Provider News

From the desk of
Corey Ewing
CEO, WellCare of Kentucky

IN THIS ISSUE

To our valued healthcare providers,

As we navigate the evolving healthcare landscape, we remain committed to a collaborative partnership. We believe in aligning efforts to deliver high-quality, cost-effective care to our patient population, prioritizing patient experience and using innovative solutions to care for our members.

As WellCare of Kentucky launches its re-imagined quarterly newsletter, it is our desire to share important information regarding policy changes, key operational and clinical updates, and important reminders that we hope you and your organization will find valuable.

In this first edition, take note of our upcoming Provider Summits and changes to our Payment Integrity program. For more information, please visit our provider website or contact your Provider Relations Representative.

Sincerely,

Corey Ewing

Plan President & CEO

WellCare Health Plans
invite you to our

2025 Provider Summit

WellCare of Kentucky

WellCare leadership team and representatives will provide updates and information on important resources to assist you in servicing WellCare members.

SAVE THE DATES

Tuesday • April 22, 2025

Embassy Suites on Newtown Pike
Lexington, KY

— OR —

Thursday • April 24, 2025

Sloan Convention Center
Bowling Green, KY

Additional details coming soon!

MAKE YOUR RESERVATION TODAY

Email: Brannon Long
Brannon.Long@wellcare.com

Phone: 1-859-264-5150

RSVP WITH THE FOLLOWING DETAILS:

- Office/group name
- Which location you will be attending
- The name, title, contact phone number and email address of each person attending

RSVP deadline: 10 days before the event date.

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State Approved 3/25/2025

Getting to know WellCare of Kentucky's Plan President and CEO, Corey Ewing

What led you to joining WellCare of Kentucky? I was the COO of our health plan in Indiana and had always heard great things about Kentucky. When this position opened up, I applied and was fortunate enough to be selected for the role.

What are the key priorities for WellCare of Kentucky in the coming year? Improving our customers' experience, and that includes our members, providers, and staff.

Talk about the importance of the WellCare/ Provider relationship. I want us to be viewed as the easiest MCO to work with and seen as a partner to the provider.

If you could share one piece of information with our providers, what would it be? That I worked in hospital administration for almost 20 years, and I appreciate all that they do. Which is why I want us to be viewed as the easiest to work with.

What do you believe is the most important quality for a successful team? Humility and consistency; we are here to serve and need to lead that way.

What was your first job, and what did you learn from it? Working for my Dad's HVAC business. I learned to appreciate hard work and to never treat anyone differently.

What motivates you? When I hear member stories where we successfully connected a member with the services and care that they needed.

What TV show are you currently binge-watching? *Vice Grip Garage*

What's the best advice you've ever received? The same advice I always gave my staff at the hospital—work hard and be nice!

Did you know?
By: Cathy Davis

- ***Did you know that that WellCare offers a biweekly instructional webinar focused on provider education?*** The webinar covers a variety of topics and is a perfect learning opportunity for both new and established WellCare providers. Register for our webinars and find out more here https://www.wellcareky.com/providers/informational-webinar.html

- ***Did you know that WellCare has Provide Relations Representatives across Kentucky who are available to help providers navigate any of their needs?*** The Provider Relations team is ready to visit you onsite and to continue their role as your primary WellCare contact. Please refer to our Provider Relations Directory in this newsletter.

- ***Did you know that WellCare has a public website dedicated to providing our members and providers with all the tools and benefits we have available?*** On the public section of our website, you will find pages dedicated to providers that include tools such as our Quick Reference Guide or Provider Manual. This is also where you will find important news and updates, such as dates of our upcoming 2025 Provider Summits. https://www.wellcareky.com/providers/medicaid.html?_gl=1*x4ghlg*_ga*NDMzOTcwNTAwLjE3Mzc3NTAyNjk.*_ga_XNQEBXVC3J*MTczOTI5MjAxNy41LjEuMTczOTI5MjQwMC42MC4wLjA.

Using State Health Information Exchanges

In Kentucky, we have several health information exchanges and repositories that can be useful to access, locate, and share patient health information among health provider and managed care organizations (MCOs). The main two health information systems to use are the Kentucky Health Information Exchange (KHIE) and the Kentucky Immunization Registry (KYIR).

Kentucky Health Information Exchange (KHIE)

The Kentucky Health Information Exchange (KHIE) is a secure network where participants with certified electronic health record technology (CEHRT) can access, locate, and share needed patient health information with other healthcare providers at the point of care. KHIE Participants have access to the following types of data: patient demographics, lab and pathology results, transcribed reports including radiology, immunization data, summaries of care, treatment plans, behavioral health data, and transfer data.

For more information and registration: **khie.ky.gov/ Get-Started/Pages/default.aspx**

Kentucky Immunization Registry (KYIR)

The Kentucky Immunization Registry (KYIR) is a web-based, statewide registry that collects and reports immunization data across a variety of metrics. Users can be electronic or manual, connecting to the system through electronic health records (EHR), or the through the KYIR web application. The system protects data quality and combines individual immunization information into a single, accurate record. KYIR can receive and send data securely to ensure privacy, confidentiality, and accuracy.

To register: **chfs.ky.gov/agencies/ dph/dehp/idb/Pages/kyir.aspx**

Why Should We Use Health Information Exchanges (HIE)?

Using available health information exchanges can be useful in many ways for providers and managed care organization (MCOs) alike. Using HIEs can help to support public health efforts by creating a feedback loop for health-related research and practice. It can also allow public health researchers and officials to keep track of health trends to improve health outcomes.

HIEs create a way for providers to communicate with one another to coordinate treatment plans and eliminate redundancies in testing, health services, or medications and/or vaccinations administered, ultimately improving health quality and efficacy.

The use of HIEs is also a bridge between providers and MCOs to ensure easy data transfer for record abstraction and accurate claim filing, streamlining administrative tasks. This simplifies the record sharing process and allows for a more efficient and accurate data transfer.

Sources:

1. Team Kentucky, "Kentucky Immunization Registry (KYIR)", Retrieved from chfs.ky.gov/ agencies/dph/dehp/idb/Pages/ kyir.aspx
2. Team Kentucky, "KYIR Training and Information Resources;" chfs. ky.gov/agencies/dph/dehp/idb/ Pages/kyirtrain.aspx
3. Kentucky Health Information Exchange," About KHIE;" khie. ky.gov/About/Pages/About-KHIE.aspx
4. Kentucky.gov, "Researching Vaccine Records Made Easy: A Guide for the KY School Nurse;" education.ky.gov/ districts/enrol/Documents/ Researching%20Vaccine%20 Records_ASM_ADA_2022.pptx. gov, "HIE Benefits;" healthit.gov/ topic/health-it-and-health-information-exchange-basics/ hie-benefits#:~:text=HIE%20 benefits%20 include%3A&text=Provides%20 caregivers%20with%20 clinical%20 decision,related%20 research%20and%20actual%20 practice
5. HEATHIT.gov, "Health Information Exchange: The Benefits;"healthit. gov/faq/why-health-information-exchange-important

WellCare Roster Reminder

To ensure that WellCare of Kentucky loads practitioners and facilities in a timely manner, updates changes to provider/facility information, and terms providers no longer with the provider group, it is important that all rosters submitted are complete and accurate. The roster contains three tabs, which are listed below.

New tab: Use this tab for all new practitioners and facilities that are new enrollees. It is essential that this tab be completely populated with all applicable fields.

Update tab: Use this tab for all existing practitioners and facilities who have successfully completed a previous WellCare of Kentucky practitioner/facility load. The comment column should include what the request is (example: change practitioner name, change address, update open/closed panel status). Once comments have been entered, the roster must be completed.

Term tab: Use this tab for all existing practitioners and facilities that are terming. The term date and reason must be entered into the Comments column. If the provider is a PCP and the group would like the members moved to a specific PCP, there is an *ASSIGNS PATIENTS TO* column that is designed to provide the PCP name and NPI.

To request a copy of the current roster, please contact your Provider Relations Representative.

WellCare of Kentucky's Extra Benefits for Medicaid Members

By Darren Levitz

In addition to required benefits, WellCare Medicaid members can receive a wide array of extra benefits. In 2025, we're offering over $4,500 in value added benefits and rewards to help our members stay healthy. These extra benefits our available to our members at no additional cost.

This year's extra benefits were carefully curated by listening to feedback from physicians, community partners, and our members.

Our most popular perk is our Health & Wellness benefit. Members can receive up to $300 in non-medicinal products shipped free to their home. The 18-page catalog includes items such as diapers, dental care, first aid, laundry detergent, sunscreen, reading glasses, and more.

Pregnant members and new parents have access to rewards such as a free stroller, portable playpen, car seat, or six packs of diapers for completing their prenatal appointments. New this year is a milk/formula supplement to train a healthy infant immune system and decrease the risk of food allergies.

School aged members can use multiple tools to reach educational milestones. Some of what WellCare offers is free tutoring, no-cost internet, and $1,000 scholarships. Outside of school, we want kids to be active. We'll once again cover the cost of Scouts for boys and girls, and cover the cost of sports physicals.

For our adult members, we focus on helping them meet their life and career goals. Members can sign up for free life and job skills courses, have criminal records expunged, and get a free State ID.

MyHealthPays is a robust preventative care reward program that pays up to $610 in rewards by completing qualifying healthy activities. This year members earn points for each activity and can redeem them for gift cards or merchandise.

We're excited to offer all these extra benefits and programs to our Medicaid Members at no additional cost. To learn more about these benefits, go to our website or call 1-877-389-9457 (TTY: 711).

What Is WellCare Availity Essentials Portal and How to Get Started

By Elizabeth Caudill

WellCare has chosen Availity Essentials as its new, secure provider portal. Starting November 18, 2024, you can validate eligibility and benefits, submit claims, check claim status, submit authorizations, and access WellCare payer resources via Availity Essentials.

If you are already working in Essentials, you can log in to your existing Essentials account External Link to enjoy these benefits for WellCare's members beginning November 18, 2024:

- Use Availity Essentials to verify member eligibility and benefits, submit claims, check claim status, submit authorizations, and more.

- Look for additional functionality in WellCare's payer space on Essentials and use the heart icon to add apps to **My Favorites** in the top navigation bar. Our current secure portal will still be available for other functions you may use today.

- Access Manage My Organization – Providers to save provider information. You can then auto-populate that information repeatedly to eliminate repetitive data entry and reduce errors.

If you are new to Availity Essentials, getting your Essentials account is the first step toward working with WellCare on Availity.

Getting started: Designate an Availity administrator for your provider organization. Your provider organization's designated Availity administrator is the person responsible for registering your organization in Essentials and managing user accounts. This person should have legal authority to sign agreements for your organization.

Check out some of the time-saving tools that come with an Availity Essentials account:

- Verify member eligibility and benefits, submit claims, check claim status, and submit authorizations.

- Look for additional functionality in WellCare of Kentucky's payer space and use the heart icon to add apps to My Favorites in the top navigation bar.

- Save provider information in Essentials and auto-populate it to save time and prevent errors.

Join one of the free webinars or live sessions, to learn additional tips for streamlining your workflow. We'll show you how to verify eligibility and benefits, submit claims, check claim status, submit authorizations, and more.

We're excited to welcome you to Availity Essentials, helping you transform the way you impact patient care with WellCare . If you need additional assistance with your registration, please call Availity Client Services at **1-800-AVAILITY** (282-4548). Assistance is available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.–8 p.m. ET. For general questions, please reach out to your WellCare Provider Relations Representative.

| HOW DOES THIS IMPACT ME?	WHAT IS MY NEXT BEST STEP?
I am the administrator: I am the designated Availity administrator for my organization.	Visit Register and Get Started with Availity Essentials External Link to enroll for training and access other helpful resources.
I am not the administrator: I am NOT the designated Availity administrator for my organization.	Your designated Availity administrator will determine who needs access to Availity Essentials on behalf of your organization and will add user accounts in Essentials.
I am not sure: I am not sure who will be the designated Availity administrator for my organization.	Share this information with your manager to help determine who will be the designated Availity administrator for your organization.

CDC Tobacco Cessation Recommendations

As part of WellCare's ongoing commitment to improving patient health, we want to highlight the importance of tobacco cessation and share valuable resources and evidence-based strategies to help your patients successfully quit. Tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of disease and death in Kentucky, but with the right support, patients can increase their chances of quitting and achieving long-term abstinence.

The CDC's Tobacco Cessation Protocol: A Comprehensive Approach

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed a proven, structured tobacco cessation protocol that incorporates a combination of behavioral interventions and pharmacotherapy. As healthcare providers, you can play a pivotal role in helping patients achieve tobacco-free lives by utilizing these protocols.

Here's an overview of the CDC's recommended steps for tobacco cessation:

1. **Ask:** Regularly ask all patients about their tobacco use. Routine screening ensures you can identify individuals who may benefit from cessation support.
2. **Advise:** Strongly advise all tobacco users to quit. Offer clear, personalized messaging about the health risks and benefits of quitting, reinforcing the importance of cessation for overall well-being.
3. **Assess:** Determine the patient's readiness to quit and tailor the intervention accordingly. If the patient is ready, provide support and resources; if not, offer encouragement to try again in the future.
4. **Assist:** Offer evidence-based treatments, including:
   » **Behavioral Counseling:** Brief interventions or counseling sessions can significantly improve cessation success. Use methods such as motivational interviewing or cognitive-behavioral therapy.

   » **Pharmacotherapy:** Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), such as patches, gum, or lozenges, and prescription medications like varenicline (Chantix) and bupropion (Zyban), can help manage withdrawal symptoms and cravings.
5. **Arrange:** Follow up with patients regularly to track their progress, address challenges, and offer continued support. Consider scheduling follow-up calls or appointments or refer patients to local tobacco cessation programs.
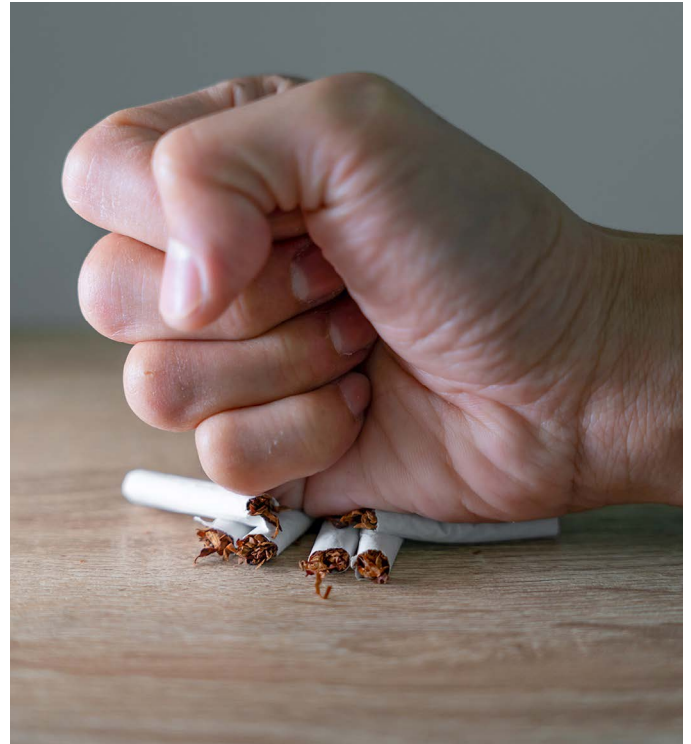
Evidence-Based Practices for Improving Abstinence Rates

Incorporating the following evidence-based strategies can further enhance the success of tobacco cessation efforts:

- **Tailored Treatment Plans:** Understand that each patient's journey to quitting is unique. Customize your approach based on their smoking habits, nicotine dependence, and readiness to quit.
- **Utilize Multi-Modal Interventions:** Combine behavioral therapy with pharmacotherapy to increase quit rates. Studies show that combining counseling with medication significantly improves the likelihood of successful cessation.

- **Address Co-Existing Conditions:** Many tobacco users also struggle with mental health conditions such as depression or anxiety. Offering integrated care for these conditions can improve cessation outcomes.

- **Engage Family and Social Support:** Encourage patients to involve their family or social networks in their cessation efforts. Support systems play a crucial role in increasing motivation and accountability.

- **Provide Digital and Mobile Support:** With the rise of mobile health applications, consider recommending or referring patients to tobacco cessation apps or text message-based programs for continuous support and tracking.

Resources for Providers and Patients

- **Tobacco Cessation Tools:** The CDC provides a wealth of resources, including smoking cessation guides, screening tools, and patient handouts. These tools are invaluable for ensuring you have the right information to assist your patients effectively.

- **Kentucky Quitlines:** Kentucky QuitNow offers free services that provide coaching and support for individuals trying to quit smoking. Encourage patients to take advantage of these services.

  » *Adult Quitline for ages 18 and older* may call **1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669)** or text **QUITNOW** to **333888**

  » *Adolescent Quitline for ages 17 or younger* can call *My Life, My Quit* at **1-855-891-9989** or text **START MY QUIT** to **36072**

- **National Helpline:** The CDC's National Tobacco Cessation Hotline (1-800-QUIT-NOW) is available to offer immediate help and support to those attempting to quit.

Your Role in Tobacco Cessation

Your intervention can have a profound impact on your patients' health. By routinely screening for tobacco use, providing strong advice to quit, and offering effective cessation tools and follow-up, you can help more patients achieve a tobacco-free life.

Together, we can make a significant difference in the fight against tobacco-related diseases. Let's continue to leverage the CDC's protocols and evidence-based practices to support our patients in achieving long-term abstinence from tobacco.

Citations:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2021). Tobacco Cessation: Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs—2014. CDC. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/stateandcommunity/best_practices/pdfs/cessation-2014.pdf

- National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Cancer Institute. (2020). Clearway Minnesota's Smoking Cessation Guidelines and Resources. National Cancer Institute. https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/tobacco

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2020). Smoking Cessation: A Report of the Surgeon General. https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/tobacco/index.html

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). (2019). Tobacco Use and Cessation: Evidence-Based Recommendations for Primary Care Providers. AHRQ. https://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/prevention-chronic-care/improve/primary-care/tobacco-use-cessation.html

- World Health Organization (WHO). (2019). Tobacco Cessation and Evidence-Based Interventions. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/tobacco

Optum Enhancement Update

WellCare of Kentucky is pleased to announce recent enhancements to Optum CPI Program's 'Smart Exclusion' criteria, aimed at improving Provider Experience with the Payment Integrity Office. The 'Smart Exclusion' logic allows providers to exempt themselves from medical record requests by demonstrating a consistent trend of accurate billing behavior over a specified period. With these enhancements, it will now be easier for providers to achieve exempt status.

- Providers who bill correctly 85% of the time for professional and outpatient claims will now reach the exempt level. The previous threshold was 90%.
- Once providers achieve this level, they will be exempt from medical record requests for 90 days (this remains unchanged).
- After the 90-day exemption period, providers will re-enter the program. However, if they reach the 85% accuracy level again, they will be permanently excluded from medical record requests. Previously, this required three exclusion rounds.

It's important to note that the smart exclusion is applied at the individual analytic level and is linked to your individual WellCare provider identification number (not NPI or tax identifier). This change went into production February 1st, 2025.

We trust these changes will continue to support you in providing high quality services to our members. If you have any specific questions regarding these changes, please reach out to your provider relations representative.

New Phone Number, Office Address or Change in Panel Status?

Send an email on your letterhead with the updated information to KY_ProviderCorrection@wellcare.com. Please include contact information if we need to follow up with you.

Updating Provider Directory Information: **WE RELY ON OUR PROVIDER NETWORK TO ADVISE US OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES SO WE CAN KEEP OUR INFORMATION CURRENT.**

To ensure our members and Provider Relations staff have up-to-date provider information, please give us advance notice of changes you make to your office phone number, office address or panel status (open/closed). Thirty-day advance notice is recommended.

Thank you for helping us maintain up-to-date directory information for your practice.

Centene's Products in Kentucky

Medicaid Health Plans
Locally-focused Medicaid plans that deliver whole health solutions

Ambetter Health Plans
Marketplace Insurance plans offering affordable high quality health care access

Medicare Advantage
Competitive plans with multiple offerings to serve all eligible populations

Centene's products all align with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) and State Agency's overall efforts to provide higher quality and more coordinated care.

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