



Louisiana Managed
Medicaid Association

Strategies to Address Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the COVID-19 Health Crisis

A Position Paper Of The Louisiana
Managed Medicaid Association

COVID-19 Disease Disproportionately Hit Black Residents in Louisiana

As of May 4, 2020, 57.4 percent of COVID-19 related deaths were black individuals, who make up only 32% of the population. By comparison, 40.4% of COVID-19 related deaths were white individuals, a group that makes up 58% of the population.

Data analysis coupled with research on the health impact of COVID-19 will shed more light on the relationship between preexisting conditions and COVID-19 health outcomes. Preliminary reports suggest that conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, and kidney disease may lead to more severe complications of COVID-19.

However, according to the Data Center in New Orleans, initial data clarifies that racial disparities in preexisting conditions alone does not explain the disproportionate number of black Louisianans who have died from COVID-19.

Endnote references: i, ii, iii, iv.

MANAGED CARE STRATEGIES TO COMBAT COVID-19 DISPARITIES



Ensure Timely Access to Critical Screening, Assessment and Treatment of the Virus through the Managed Care Provider Networks.

Critical to the eradication of COVID-19 is assuring equal access to testing and screening regardless of socioeconomic status, racial and ethnic background or living environment. The LMMA has instituted surveillance of provider networks to identify current gaps in testing and screening. Further, promoting provider understanding of personal protective equipment recommended preferences and sterilization of offices. Access to care is enhanced via telehealth modalities to keep vulnerable population safe. Finally, as NCQA5^v accredited health plans, we understand that working people living in black and low-income communities need a flexible system to accommodate the work schedules, location and time availabilities when seeking care.



Enhance Contact Tracing through Established Relationships with High Risk Members through Case Management Programs.

According to the CDC, contact tracing is a multipronged approach to fight the COVID-19 Pandemic.^{6vi} A critical component of contact tracing is working collaboratively across multiple agencies to stop transmission. Recognizing that contact tracing is a special skill requiring a specific skillset the LMMA stands ready to assist with transitional case management to support high risk members who are in isolation and need transition from one setting to another, social services or housing if unable to socially isolate in their current living situation. We have robust clinical programs to address the chronic diseases that co-exist with COVID-19. These programs help to address housing, food insecurity, medication adherence and linkage to clinical care. Most importantly, we can stop the spread of the virus through our attentive interaction with members, in partnership with their PCP's.



Implement Marketing and Educational Programs to Support the Efforts of the Louisiana Office of Public Health.

Member outreach and distribution of promotional materials are core competencies of our marketing teams. These materials may have a focus on educational programs to stay safe and promote national (i.e., CDC) guidelines as they become available for citizens at large. This outreach extends to our quality departments targeting improved quality metrics and outcomes. Health plans can offer tailored aggregate training programs, public service announcements, and positive messaging addressing mental health sequelae of the pandemic. We have collaborated with the Louisiana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics to encourage well care visits and immunizations for young children.



Analyze Data to Identify the Root Cause of the Disparity and to Predict Trends.

The managed care analytics teams of the health plans have the core competencies to study the Medicaid populations with a focus to delineate risk factors and provide a more comprehensive picture of the socioeconomic barriers, behavioral health offerings, access to care, and employment opportunities---based on zip codes and census tracts. We have produced a number of reports over the years related to Obesity, Diabetes and other chronic conditions. We have submitted to LDH an annual health disparities questionnaire. These reports bare re-examining in the context of the current pandemic. These data sources can contribute to the solutions for the Medicaid recipients. The COVID-19 Health Disparity task force can utilize a data analytic team to aggregate and interpret the collective data from the MCO's, fee for service Medicaid, Louisiana based commercial insurance carriers and uninsured Louisianans for use by the task force.



Address Psychosocial and Structural Barriers through Already Established Programs.

According to The Lancet^{vii} a significant driver of the COVID-19 disparate effect on communities of color has been structural factors that prevent those communities from practicing social distancing. The health plans have the infrastructure to support a strategic plan to address these barriers as evidenced by our myriad psychosocial programs. Our case management teams have provided discharge planning to members leaving the hospital and the transitional care facilities. We each have Health Disparity divisions within our respective companies with the mission of addressing these issues nationally.

THE LMMA IS A DEDICATED AND WILLING PARTNER TO ELIMINATE THE COVID-19 HEALTH DISPARITY

The Louisiana Medicaid Managed Care plans have already invested in the areas of access to care, case management, social marketing, population health/ data analytics and the psychosocial determinants of health. We have the bandwidth to assist the COVID-19 Health Disparity Commission. Long-standing, we are willing to collaborate with the Louisiana Department of Health to execute the Health Equity Plan developed by the Office of Community Partnership and Health thereby addressing bias within our healthcare system while ultimately mitigating the adverse psychosocial determinants of health.

About the Louisiana Managed Medicaid Association

Over 1.6 million Louisiana residents receive health care coverage through the Medicaid health plans of the Louisiana Managed Medicaid Association. We collaborate with government partners, providers, community organizations and our members to improve health, encourage whole-person wellness, and responsibly manage health care costs.

The Medicaid health plans of the Louisiana Managed Medicaid Association are:



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ⁱ Yancy, C. (2020, April 14). COVID and African Americans. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2764789>

ⁱⁱ Monitoring the COVID-19 Pandemic in New Orleans and Louisiana. (2020, April 20).

<https://www.datacenterresearch.org/covid-19-data-and-information/covid-19-data/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Data Visualization. (2020, May 5). <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/data-visualization.htm>

^{iv} Louisiana Department of Health. COVID-19 Updated. <http://ldh.la.gov/Coronavirus>

^v National Committee for Quality Assurance. <https://www.ncqa.org/>

^{vi} Contract Tracing: Part of a Multipronged Approach to Fight the COVID-19 Pandemic. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/principles-contact-tracing.html>

^{vii} COVID-19 Exacerbating Inequalities in the US. (2020, April 18). [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)30893-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30893-X/fulltext)