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# PROVIDER NEWS



Issue 10, October 2024

A newsletter for the Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield providers in western New York

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# Prior Authorization CHANGES in the New Year



Effective Feb. 1, 2025, more than 100 codes will be added to the prior authorization list, including codes related to the following procedures, treatments, and medical devices:

- Arthrodesis
- Cholecystectomy
- Correction, hallux valgus (bunionectomy)
- Extracapsular cataract removal
- Gastrectomy
- Laminectomy
- Laparoscopy
- Segmental pneumatic appliance

To see the codes requiring prior authorization on Feb. 1, click [here](#).

## Important Information for Acquiring Prior Authorization

The [List of Procedures/DME Requiring Authorization](#) for Highmark is subject to change. During the year, Highmark makes several adjustments to its full list of outpatient procedures, services, durable medical equipment, and drugs requiring authorization. For benefits to be paid, the member must be eligible on the date of service and the service must be a covered benefit. Providers should use [Availity](#) or the applicable HIPAA electronic transactions to check member benefits and eligibility, to verify if an authorization is required, and to obtain authorization for services before they are rendered.





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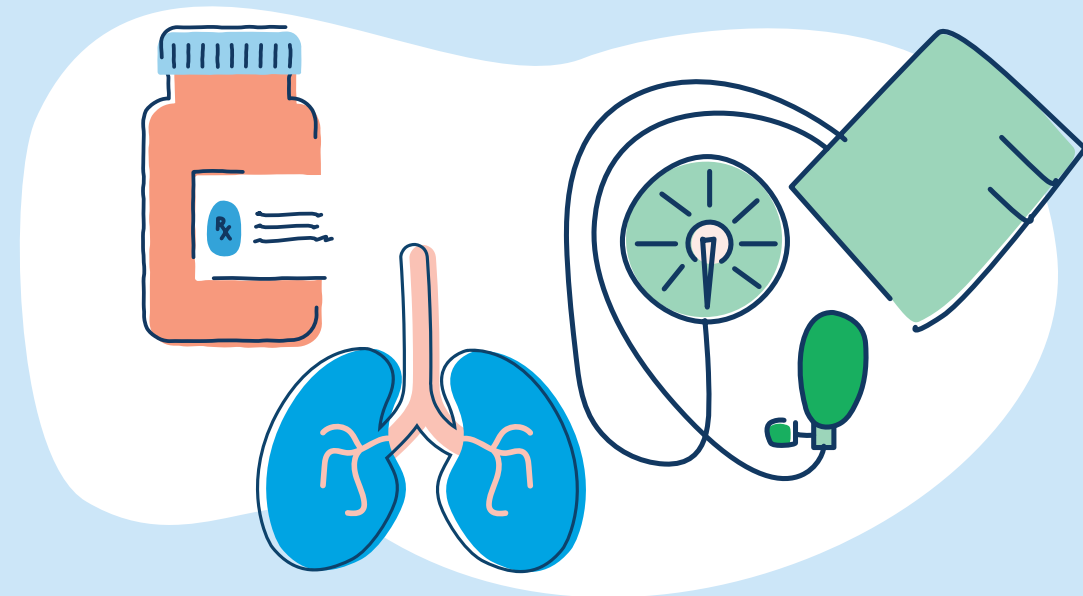
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# HEDIS Tips: 5 Ways to Close Gaps in the Next 60 Days



With the end of the year fast approaching, there's still time to close Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS®) gaps. By doing so, you will improve patient care while also boosting your practice's quality scores.

These five HEDIS measures present an excellent opportunity for gap closure within the next two months:

## 1. Avoidance of Antibiotic Treatment for Acute Bronchitis/ Bronchiolitis (AAB)

- **Measure:** AAB
- **Documentation:** Avoid prescribing antibiotics for acute bronchitis/ bronchiolitis day of visit or three days following unless patients have co-morbid diagnoses, such as pneumonia or COPD.
- **Exclusionary Codes:** Submit on claim any ICD-10 codes to exclude members with competing diagnoses (e.g., pneumonia, sinusitis).
- **Patient Education:** Inform patients about the potential side effects of antibiotics and recommend supportive care measures.
- **Resource:** See the article in July [Provider News](#)

## 2. Diabetes – Glycemic Status Assessment Diabetes (GSD)

- **Measure:** GSD
- **Documentation:** Document HbA1c, point-of-care test, or average glucose results and date in the member's chart. Use the lowest result if multiple assessments are recorded on the same date.
- **CGM Data:** Remind members with continuous glucose monitor (CGM) devices to bring in their most recent average glucose results. Self-reported results are eligible if documented.



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HEDIS Tips: 5 Ways to Close Gaps in the Next 60 Days (Continued)

- **CPT II Codes:** Submit the appropriate CPT II code based on the HbA1c or average glucose value.
- **Resource:** See the recent [Special Bulletin](#).

### 3. Hypertension – Controlling High Blood Pressure (CBP)

- **Measure:** CBP
- **Documentation:** Document multiple BP readings if elevated. Use the lowest systolic and diastolic readings if taken on the same day.
- **Home Monitoring:** Encourage home BP monitoring and document self-reported readings.
- **CPT II Codes:** Submit both a systolic and diastolic code to capture the completed BP reading.
- **Resource:** See the recent [Special Bulletin](#).

### 4. Prenatal and Postpartum Care

- **Measure:** Prenatal/Postpartum Care
- **Coding:** Use CPT II codes for prenatal and postpartum visits.
- **Timing:** Prenatal care begins in the first trimester. Postpartum care occurs 7-84 days post-delivery.
- **Live Births:** Live births must be delivered between Oct. 8, 2023, and Oct. 7, 2024.
- **Resource:** See the recent [Special Bulletin](#).

### 5. Statin Therapy

- **Measure:** Statin Therapy for Cardiovascular Disease
- **Exclusionary Codes:** Use the following ICD-10 codes to exclude members intolerant to statins due to myopathy, myositis, or myalgia:

ICD-10 EXCLUSION CODES	DEFINITION
G72.0	Drug-induced myopathy
G72.2	Myopathy due to other toxic agents
G72.9	Myopathy, unspecified
M60.80	Other Myositis, unspecified
M60.9	Myositis, unspecified
M62.82	Rhabdomyolysis
M79.10	Myalgia, unspecified site
M79.18	Myalgia, other site

- **Resource:** [ICD-10 Exclusionary Codes For Members Intolerant To Statin Therapy](#)

### Key Takeaways

Coding and documentation are crucial for closing HEDIS gaps. Using the correct CPT II and ICD-10 codes – along with thoroughly documenting assessments, readings, and visits – allows for accurate HEDIS reporting.

Patient engagement matters. Encourage members to participate in self-monitoring and bring relevant data to appointments.

By following these tips, providers can ensure accurate HEDIS reporting and contribute to better patient care.

HEDIS® is a registered trademark of the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA).





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# Empowering Your Patients with My Highmark



Highmark strives to deliver the best possible care outcomes for our members. One powerful tool that helps us achieve this is [My Highmark](#), our secure online member portal and mobile app.

My Highmark brings together everything our members need to manage their benefits and reach their health goals, including:

- **Easy Access to Health Information** – Members can view their virtual member ID card, claims, benefits, and medical records.
- **Personalized Support** – Members can personalize their digital experience with a Health Assessment, creating a unique member journey to track health goals, screenings, and activities, such as chronic condition management, sleep improvement, and exercise.

- **Increased Engagement** – My Highmark helps to ensure that our members are more actively involved in their health care, so they can better adhere to treatment plans and make healthier choices.

In addition, your patients can gain access to clinical support programs that help them reach their goals and manage their health conditions between office visits, including:

- **Mental Well-Being powered by Spring Health** – Offers personalized care through self-guided tools and wellness coaching, and virtual care with a therapist or psychiatrist.
- **CHF and COPD Management powered by Vida** – For eligible patients with congestive heart failure (CHF) and/or chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD), this program supports patients between office visits through self-management and virtual one-on-one health coaching, to prioritize medication adherence and improve outcomes.

- **Virtual Physical Care Program** – With patient care provided by licensed physical therapists, members receive a “Digital Therapist” kit including a secure tablet, which provides access to their personalized Sword therapy program to help manage musculoskeletal pain.

[My Highmark](#) can be a valuable tool for both you and your patients. Highmark members can go to [myhighmark.com](#) or download the My Highmark app to create a new account with a username and password. Please encourage your patients to enroll in My Highmark and to regularly check into the portal/app.

## Resources

- [My Highmark](#)
- [Condition Management Programs](#)





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## SHORT TAKES:

# Essential Plan Update, Fee Schedule, HCRA, and More



### Reminder: Emergency Department Claim Audits Using CMS Criteria

**Effective Sept. 1, 2023**, Highmark began auditing all outpatient Emergency Department facility claims to ensure the correct procedure codes are being billed. These audits are designed to determine the appropriate and fair level of facility reimbursement for emergency department services based on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) criteria for the appropriate procedure code. For more information, see the recent [Special Bulletin](#).

### Essential Plan Update: Highmark to Transition Administration to Wellpoint on Jan. 1, 2025

Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield in Western New York is transitioning administration of Essential Plan to Wellpoint Partnership Plan, LLC (formerly Amerigroup Partnership Plan, LLC) **effective Jan. 1, 2025**. This transition was approved by the New York State Department of Health on July 31, 2024. For more information, see last month's [Provider News](#).

### Medicare Update: No Cost-Sharing for Pre Exposure Prophylaxis for HIV Prevention

**Effective Sept. 30, 2024**, Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) to prevent HIV is now covered without cost-sharing by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) under Medicare Part B.

HIV PrEP for prevention drugs were previously covered under Medicare Part D and were typically subject to a deductible and coinsurance or co-pay. CMS transitioned coverage of PrEP for HIV prevention to Medicare Part B, and beneficiaries have no Part B cost-sharing obligations (i.e., deductibles or co-pays).

Antiretroviral drugs used for the treatment of HIV continue to be covered under Medicare Part D, even though these may be the same drugs that are used for HIV PrEP. To learn more, go [here](#).

### Reimbursement Update: Daily Maximum to Increase for Most Therapy Services

**Effective Nov. 1, 2024**, Highmark is increasing the Daily Dollar Maximum (DDM) for most therapy services in the Western New York and Northeastern New York regions.

For physical therapy (PT) and occupational therapy (OT) services, the DDM rate is increasing for both Commercial and Medicare Advantage lines of business. For Chiropractic Services, the DDM is increasing for Commercial and remaining the same for Medicare Advantage. To see the rates, click [here](#).

### Annual Fee Schedule Update Will Occur on Nov. 1, 2024

Our annual fee schedule update for Commercial and Medicare Advantage products in our New York regions will take effect on Nov. 1, 2024. Updates include some incremental increases and decreases throughout the fee schedule to align with Highmark's fee schedules. Learn more [here](#).

### Facility Providers: Highmark to Align HCRA Processes with NY State Recommendations

To align with New York (NY) State Department of Health's recommendations and to reduce unnecessary health care expenditures, Highmark is making changes to its Health Care Reform Act (HCRA) processes, **effective Nov. 15, 2024**. Highmark notified facility providers on Aug. 12 of this upcoming change via an email that linked to this [Special Bulletin](#).





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# SURVEY SAYS:

## How CAHPS Can Help Improve the Patient Experience



The Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) is an annual survey that asks a random sample of Medicare Advantage members about their experiences with their health plan and providers in the past six months.

- CAHPS questions are based on members' experience and perception – meaning that any patient interaction can impact CAHPS scores.
- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) considers CAHPS and the member experience to be so important that approximately 30% of a health plan's Medicare Star Rating is based on the survey scores.

The CAHPS survey is scheduled to take place during the second quarter of 2025.

### CAHPS Measures

There are nine CAHPS measures that are incorporated into a plan's Star Rating, with four presenting a strong opportunity for providers to positively impact the patient experience:

- Getting Appointments and Care Quickly
- Getting Needed Care
- Care Coordination
- Rating of Health Care Quality

These measures contain questions that ask members if they found it easy to get the care, tests, and treatment they needed; if they were able to get appointments for routine and specialist care when needed; if their doctor was informed about their care and helped to manage it and they received test results when they needed them; and the overall rating of the quality of their health care.

### Collaboration Is Key

Collaboration between health plans and providers is key to ensuring that members/patients have positive health care experiences. **Providers and practices that have seen high patient satisfaction results generally do the following:**

- Follow up with patients when they have seen another provider or specialist.
- Ask about prescription drugs patients may now be taking.
- Share pertinent clinical information with patients' other providers through a HIPAA-compliant health information exchange, such as [Availity](#)®.
- Assist patients with scheduling tests and referral appointments.
- Let patients know when to expect test results, and how they can access them.

### Your staff can also improve patient satisfaction by:

- Leaving some open appointment slots each day for urgent and post-inpatient visits.
- Reducing perceived wait times by assigning staff to perform preliminary work-up activities, such as blood pressure and temperature checks.
- Providing brief and frequent updates for appointment schedule delays and offering options to reschedule or be seen by another provider.
- Encouraging patients to make routine checkup or follow-up appointments in advance.
- Proactively scheduling patients – by phone, text, or email – months in advance for tests, screenings, or physicals.

For more information about the Medicare CAHPS Survey, click [here](#).



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# MENTAL WELL-BEING SOLUTION for LOW-ACUITY NEEDS



Highmark's Mental Well-Being powered by Spring Health can help your Highmark commercial, Affordable Care Act (ACA), self-funded Administrative Services Only (ASO), and Medicare



Advantage patients with low-acuity needs like stress and burnout. Your patients do not need to have a diagnosed mental health condition to enroll in the Mental Well-Being solution.

Major news events, financial worries, occupational stress/work-life balance struggles, childcare concerns, and an upcoming election can all add to the daily stresses and pressures of life for some of your patients.

## Self-Guided Tools

Mental Well-Being offers resources from self-guided tools for meditation and mindfulness exercises to wellness coaching **at no cost to your patients**. These tools may be beneficial for patients whose needs do not meet a diagnosed mental health condition or who may not be interested in therapy or medication for their mental health needs.

Once your patients are enrolled with Mental Well-Being through the My Highmark member portal, they have complete access to the solution and can use it for every level of need. If your patient's condition changes over time to a higher level of care, they will have access to additional tools and can schedule appointments with a therapist at a time that works best for their busy schedule.

We encourage you to speak with your eligible Highmark patients about enrolling in Mental Well-Being to receive individuated support for their unique needs.

For additional information about this solution, you can watch the [Mental Well-Being provider webinar](#) on the Provider Resource Center (PRC). More resources are available at the [Behavioral Health Telemedicine and Virtual Visits](#) page.







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# Authorization Updates

During the year, Highmark adjusts the [List of Procedures and Durable Medical Equipment \(DME\) Requiring Authorization](#). For information regarding authorizations required for a member's specific benefit plan, providers may:

- Call the number on the back of the member's card
- Check the member's eligibility and benefits via [Availity](#)
- Search BlueExchange through the provider's local provider portal

These changes are announced in the form of Special Bulletins and other communications posted on Highmark's Provider Resource Center (PRC). The most recent updates regarding prior authorization are below:

## Prior Authorization Changes in the New Year

Click [here](#) to read this month's top story. To learn more about the changes that occurred on Sept. 30, go [here](#).

## Approved Authorizations to be Conveyed via Highmark's Automated Call System

Highmark will be moving to an automated call system for **approved** authorization requests requiring a call, **effective Nov. 15, 2024**. Both members and providers will be notified of approved authorization requests from the automated call system rather than a Highmark customer service representative.

This change will help Highmark reduce unnecessary health care expenditures, while delivering more effective member and provider outreach. For more information, see September [Provider News](#).

## Eight Breast MRI Codes to be Removed from Prior Authorization List

**Effective Nov. 1, 2024**, the following eight breast MRI codes will be removed from the prior authorization list:

Procedure Code	Description
<b>C8903</b>	MRI breast with contrast, unilateral
<b>C8905</b>	MRI breast with and without contrast, unilateral
<b>C8906</b>	MRI breast bilateral with contrast
<b>C8908</b>	MRI breast bilateral with and without contrast
<b>77046</b>	Magnetic resonance imaging, breast, without contrast material; unilateral
<b>77047</b>	Magnetic resonance imaging, breast, without contrast material; bilateral
<b>77048</b>	Magnetic resonance imaging, breast, without and with contrast material(s), including computer-aided detection (CAD real-time lesion detection, characterization and pharmacokinetic analysis), when performed; unilateral
<b>77049</b>	Magnetic resonance imaging, breast, without and with contrast material(s), including computer-aided detection (CAD real-time lesion detection, characterization and pharmacokinetic analysis), when performed; bilateral

Beginning Nov. 1, 2024, these eight procedures will no longer require prior authorization.



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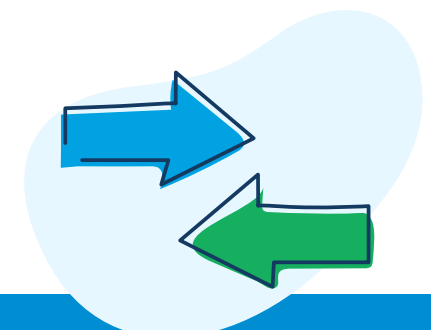
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## New and Updated Reimbursement Policies

Highmark regularly issues new or updated reimbursement policies. Keep an eye on this newsletter and the Provider Resource Center (PRC) for announcements regarding upcoming policy changes. As specific policy changes go into effect, the updated policies can be found on the Reimbursement Policies page of the PRC.



Below is a list of recent and upcoming updates to reimbursement policies (RPs):

### RECENTLY UPDATED

**Oct. 28, 2024**

**RP-054 [Ambulance Services](#)**

Direction from Medicare Advantage (MA) Medical Policy T-2 (Ground Ambulance) was transferred to RP-054, which became applicable to MA effective **Oct. 28, 2024**. There were no changes to the MA direction.

### UPCOMING

**Nov. 4, 2024**

**RP-008 [X-rays Using Film, Computed Radiography and Computed Tomography: Modifiers FX, FY, CT](#)**

This policy was reviewed as part of our standard review process. No changes in direction will be made.

**Jan. 1, 2025**

*(RP updates effective Jan. 1, 2025, will be available for review on the PRC on Dec. 31, 2024, due to the New Year's Day holiday.)*

**NEW: RP-078 [Postoperative Sinus Debridement](#)**

This new policy – applicable to Commercial and Medicare Advantage markets – will address postoperative sinus debridement and service related to sinus surgery. *(NOTE: This policy is not yet available on the PRC.)*

**NEW: RP-079 [Multiple Ultrasounds](#)**

This new policy – applicable to Commercial and Medicare Advantage markets – will address circumstances surrounding the appropriate reporting of non-obstetrical and obstetrical transabdominal and transvaginal ultrasounds. Reimbursement for multiple procedure payment reductions may be applicable when multiple services are provided during a patient encounter by the same physician or same group physician/other health care professional. *(NOTE: This policy is not yet available on the PRC.)*

### COMING SOON

**Effective Date to Be Determined**

**RP-068 [Mid-Level Practitioners and Advanced Practice Providers](#)**

This policy will be updated for New York Commercial to add direction for the psychoanalyst specialty. Psychoanalysts will be reimbursed for procedure code 90845 only.

**NEW: RP-076 [Medical Nutrition Therapy](#)**

This new policy will direct the plan's reimbursement for Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) codes 97802, 97803, 97804, G0270, and G0271 for Commercial and Medicare Advantage plans. MNT services will only be reimbursed when billed by a registered dietician or nutritional professional, or by a facility that accepts or received assignment from a registered dietician or nutritional professional. *(NOTE: This policy is not yet available on the PRC.)*





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When Highmark members are looking for a primary care physician (PCP) or specialist, they expect that our online provider directory presents information that is accurate and current.



That's why it is essential to ensure that your practice information on file with Highmark remains up to date.

Please be aware that providers who don't validate their data quarterly may be removed from the directory and their status within Highmark's networks may be impacted.

## Reviewing Data Is Vital for You

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) requires Highmark to reach out to you every quarter and ask you to validate your provider directory information. We use this information to populate our online provider directory and to help ensure correct claims processing.

### Your thorough review of your directory information confirms:

- Each practitioner's name is correct and matches the name on his/her medical license.
- Each practitioner's National Provider Identifier (NPI) is correct.

- The practice name is correct and matches the name used when you answer the phone.
- All specialties are correctly listed and are currently being practiced.
- Practitioners listed at a location currently see members and schedule appointments at that office on a regular basis.
  - All practitioners listed must be affiliated with the group. Practitioners who cover, read test results, or are hospitalists should not be listed in the provider directory.
- The practitioner is accepting new patients – or not accepting new patients – at the location.
- The practitioner's address, suite number (if any), and phone number are correct.

## Professional Providers – Use the PDM Tool

Professional providers are now required to validate their Highmark Provider Directory information within the Provider Data Maintenance (PDM) tool every 90 days.

To access PDM, sign in to [Availity](#), choose the state you practice in, click **Payer Spaces** from the task bar, and then select the Highmark plan you participate in. Once you arrive at the **Payer Spaces** page, scroll down, and select **Provider Data Maintenance** under **Applications**.

## Facility, Ancillary, and Medicaid Providers – Use Atlas

The attestation process through Atlas is quick and easy. Just follow these steps...

- 1 Go to [hub.primeatlas.com](https://hub.primeatlas.com)
- 2 Log in.
- 3 Review your information.
- 4 If no changes, confirm.
- 5 If there are changes, update your information.

If you haven't attested your provider directory information this quarter, you will receive a letter from Atlas to review your provider information. Some providers may also receive emails from Highmark about validating their directory information through the [Atlas website](#). To ensure delivery of emails from Highmark, please add the following email address, [resourcecenter@highmark.com](mailto:resourcecenter@highmark.com), to your address book.

During the attestation process, always double-check your current email address(es) to ensure that you can receive electronic communications from Highmark without delay.

If you need additional information regarding the attestation process, [Atlas' step-by-step guide](#) is available on the Provider Resource Center.



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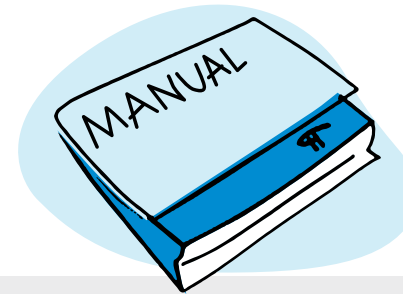
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## Staying Up to Date with the *Provider Manual*

Ensure you are regularly reviewing the [Highmark Provider Manual](#) for our most recent guidance on:

- Participation Rules
- Credentialing/Recredentialing Criteria and Procedures
- Medical Record Criteria
- Requirements for 24/7 Coverage



Some recent noteworthy changes occurred in the following chapters and units:

- **Chapter 2, Unit 6: The BlueCard Program**
- **Chapter 3, Unit 1: Network Participation Overview**
- **Chapter 4, Unit 1: PCPs and Specialists**
- **Chapter 5, Unit 3: Medicare Advantage Procedures**
- **Chapter 6, Unit 2: Electronic Claim Submission**

To see the full list of recent changes, visit the [What's New in the Highmark Provider Manual](#) page.



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# PROVIDER NEWS



Issue 10, October 2024

A newsletter for the Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield providers in western New York

## IN THIS ISSUE:

### General News

Prior Authorization Changes in the New Year

HEDIS Tips: 5 Ways to Close Gaps in the Next 60 Days

Empowering Your Patients with My Highmark

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Survey Says: How CAHPS Can Help Improve the Patient Experience

Mental Well-Being Solution for Low-Acuity Needs

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New and Updated Reimbursement Policies

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Staying Up to Date with the Highmark Provider Manual

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## About This Newsletter

*Provider News* is a valuable resource for health care providers who participate in our networks. Published monthly on the last Monday of the month\*, *Provider News* conveys important product, policy, and administrative information, including billing, claims, and program updates.

The publication also features the latest news, information, tips, and reminders about our products and services, as well as relevant interviews, articles, and stories, for health care professionals who serve Highmark members.

### Regular topics include:

- New and Updated Reimbursement Policies
- Authorization Updates
- Staying Up to Date with the *Highmark Provider Manual*

\*When a holiday falls on the last Monday of the month, *Provider News* will be published on the preceding Friday.

### Another Valuable Resource

For medical policy and claims administration updates, including coding guidelines and procedure code revisions, please refer to the Medical Policy Update Newsletter, which is available on the **Provider Resource Center > Latest Updates > Medical Policy Update**.

To subscribe to our newsletters, click [Join Our Mailing List](#).

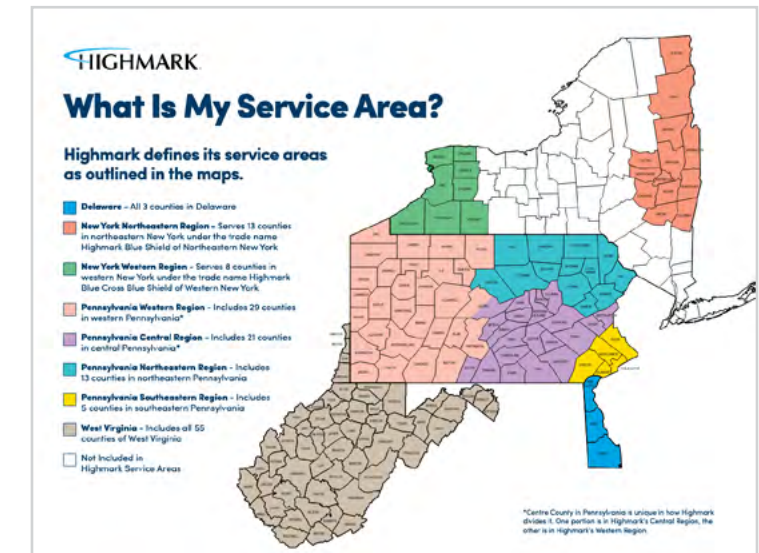
### Comments/Suggestions Welcome

We want *Provider News* to meet your needs for timely, effective communication. If you have any suggestions, comments, or ideas for articles in future issues, please email the *Provider News* team at [ResourceCenter@Highmark.com](mailto:ResourceCenter@Highmark.com).

### Highmark Quick Reference

To contact Highmark, click [here](#).

### Service Areas



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