

Overall Effectiveness and Progress of the Quality Improvement Program

South Country Health Alliance's (South Country) diamond values – collaboration, stewardship, communication, and excellence – reflect our continued commitment to a model of managed care that incorporates not only medical, mental health, dental and chiropractic care, but also public health, social services, and other local resources so our members can receive necessary care in a comprehensive and cohesive manner. Our efforts aim to improve the health outcomes of our members, and the quality of services provided to them, while containing health care costs.

South Country has adequate resources for our Quality Improvement Program. Our program includes multiple departments internally at South Country along with the services provided by our third-party administrators.

The Quality Committee structure is continually being evaluated and adjusted as needed. South Country's medical director participated in committees and workgroup meetings and chaired the Utilization Management Committee and the Medical Policy Review Committee. South Country's medical director along with a behavioral health professional and chiropractor also participate on various committees.

Our 2024 annual evaluation goes into detail in each of our Quality Improvement Program areas showing where we demonstrate the progress of our programs that meet and exceed network-wide safe clinical practices.

Highlights from 2024 include the following:

- **We continue to be a leader in working to address behavioral health needs.** The behavioral health department continued its connections with members after mental health hospitalizations. This follow-up initiative was critical throughout the COVID-19 pandemic due to the escalation in mental health symptoms in our country fueled by the increased uncertainty and isolation. South Country improved contact with the hospitals, our members, and the members' mental health targeted case managers. Another unique program South Country members continue to access is the Healthy Pathways Program, which fills a gap for our members who need behavioral health support but are not eligible for mental health targeted case management (MH-TCM). Case managers help members to engage with mental health, substance use disorders, or other services. Healthy Pathways services continue to help South Country better understand the unmet needs of our members by providing additional points of data supplied by the member's Healthy Pathways case manager.
- **We earned a 4.5 Star Quality Rating from CMS on our SeniorCare Complete product for Star Rating 2024.** CMS implemented several changes to the Star Ratings Program including increasing the weights of experience measures. Ongoing work and improvement initiatives continue. South Country's Star Ratings Workgroup collaborates to determine new initiatives and items to focus on how to maintain or increase our star ratings and care for our members. South Country continues to evolve in terms of defining its purpose and functionality and in developing effective intervention strategies that can be collaboratively implemented within the organization as well as with our providers and counties.
- **Wellness program participation continues to have increased member engagement.** South Country offers a variety of health and wellness programs focused on prevention and screenings. Over the past few years, there has been increased participation and utilization of many different

programs. Some of the many programs of interest are car seat education and distribution, community education, Be Active™ Program, and Be Rewarded™ programs. For detailed information about these programs go to the Health Promotion Programs section or visit the [wellness programs website](#).

- **Successful HEDIS submissions.** South Country will continue to promote effective project team collaboration and clear communication between our HEDIS vendor and all departments in South Country. We continue to utilize skilled internal over readers for our medical record review section to check the accuracy of the compliant/noncompliant status of medical record reviews. South Country will continue to review records for missed “opportunities” for abstraction and will re-chase or verify compliancy status of overreads conducted by South Country. Improvement initiatives were developed and implemented through a collaborative effort between several departments within South Country, including consultation with county staff and medical providers when applicable.
- **Focused studies, performance improvement projects and chronic care improvement projects.** South Country had focused studies related to cervical cancer screening and chlamydia screening. Also, we continued a chronic care improvement project focused on colorectal cancer screenings and breast cancer screenings. Moreover, we completed the fourth year of the performance improvement project that focused on the healthy start for mothers and babies. Additionally, we started a new performance improvement project focused on improving care for people with co-occurring diabetes and depression.
- **Maintaining program requirements amidst the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and the unwinding to ensure that our members continued to receive the quality care needed to stay healthy.** We continued to promote health care through models such as telehealth visits with members either by video or phone, additional social media posts and on the South Country website and continuing to meet and promote the best health for our members via different video conference platforms.
- **Our Health Equity Committee continued along with collaboration with county and community partners.** South Country is collaborating with our Sibley County partners to understand any inequities or health disadvantages, and to improve overall health outcomes for any Latinx members with a focus on disparities through a variety of interventions.
Also, we worked with the HealthFinders Collaborative to understand any structural racism, social inequities, and/or health disadvantages for members in Steele, Dodge and Waseca counties and collaborate on interventions to improve the overall health of members.
South Country’s participation in the Association for Community Affiliated Plans (ACAP) learning collaboratives has enhanced South Country’s understanding of health disparities and how to reach out to communities that are disproportionately affected by the social determinants of health.