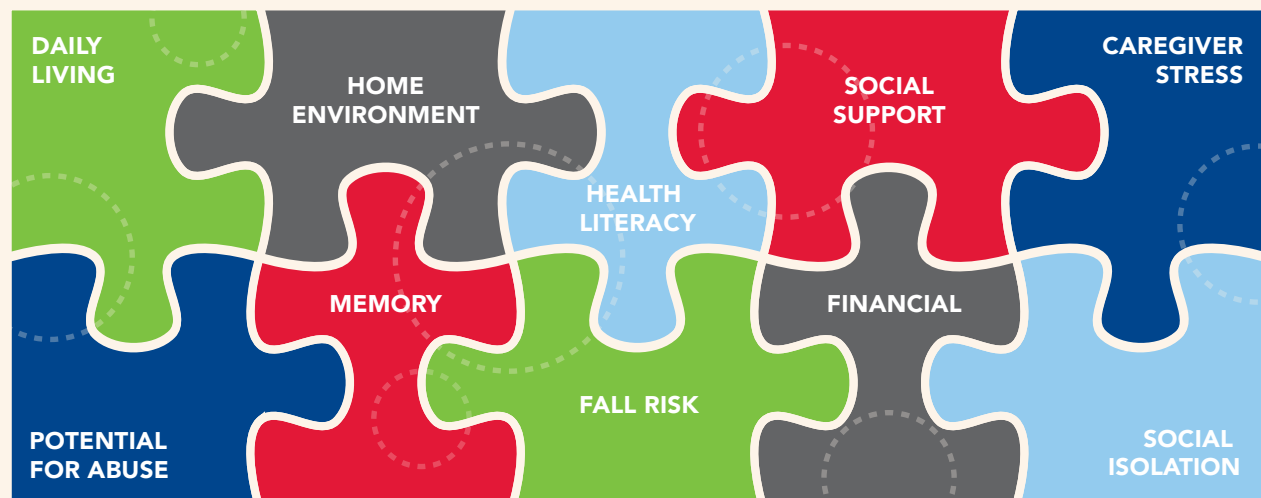


Ten Questions to Better Understand and Serve Your Complex Care Population

Policy Brief • April 2018

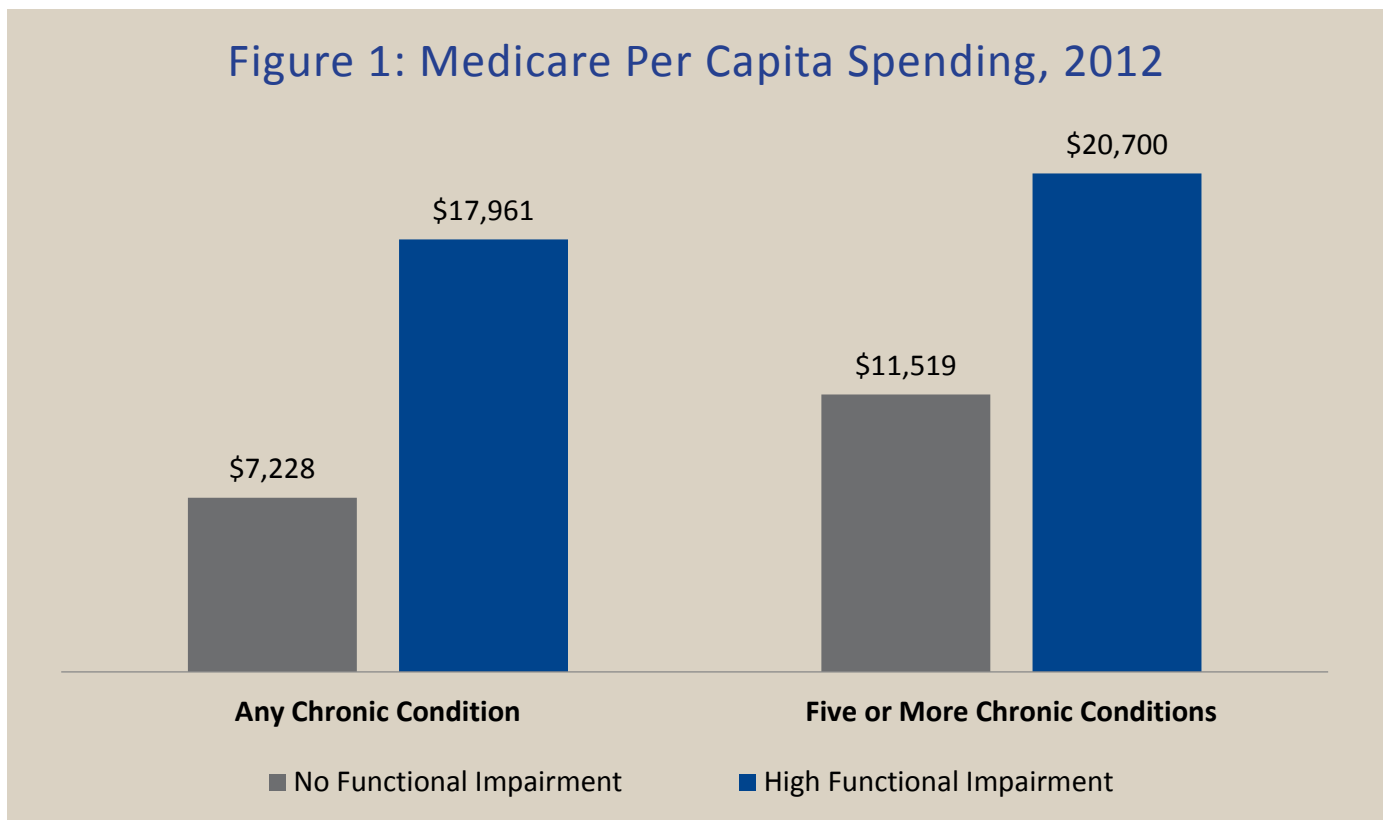
The [*CHRONIC Care Act*](#) and new CMS guidance promote assessment of functional and social needs as part of delivering more cost-effective, quality care to individuals with complex needs. This brief shares 10 questions required of California’s Medicaid managed care plans, which health plans and systems nationwide could consider for their risk assessment instruments.

10 AREAS TO ASSESS FUNCTION AND SOCIAL NEEDS



Overview

Health systems often identify individuals as “high cost,” “high need,” and/or “high risk” by using administrative and clinical data captured as part of medical billing. These data include items such as diagnoses, emergency department utilization, and prescription drug costs. While this easily accessible, medically oriented information provides an initial snapshot of care complexity, research shows that non-medical factors – how a person functions on a daily basis and the extent of one’s social supports – significantly affect overall health care utilization and spending.¹ In fact, it costs twice as much to care for older adults with chronic conditions *and* functional limitations compared to those with chronic conditions alone (Figure 1).^{2,3}



Source: ATI Fact Sheet: Functional Impairment and Medical Spending, 2012

MCBS Cost and Use File, Analysis on Older Adults Receiving Help with 2+ ADLs²

To better understand the populations they serve and effectively organize care, leading health plans and accountable care organizations (ACOs) are beginning to gather person-level data about social determinants of health (i.e., access to food, housing). The risk assessment is a natural process point for health plans and ACOs to include questions that specifically capture an individual's functional and social support needs. This new knowledge can provide a clearer understanding of a person's total need profile, and how it affects their health status; improve population-level risk stratification; and support delivery system efforts that better match people who have identified needs with [high-quality, targeted interventions](#).¹

Federal policymakers are fueling this trend by promoting more comprehensive assessments and linking those with complex care needs to appropriate services inside and outside of health care.

Recent policy actions include the following:

- In a draft Medicare Advantage and Part D [2019 Call Letter](#), federal officials recognized that health risk assessment (HRA) tools must assess beneficiaries for medical, functional, cognitive, psychosocial, and mental health needs. Medicare Advantage plans will be allowed to offer beneficiary incentives for HRA completion beginning in 2019.⁴
- The [Call Letter](#) and the [CHRONIC Care Act](#) also expanded the scope of supplemental benefits in Medicare Advantage that beneficiaries could receive based on a comprehensive needs assessment.^{4,5}

California has taken a major step in this regard, as the state recently required all Medicaid managed care programs to incorporate 10 questions in their HRA that evaluate for function and social support needs. As leaders in health plans, ACOs, and other risk-bearing entities revisit their assessment tools for better management of complex care populations, below are the 10 questions to consider for inclusion.

10 Questions to Assess Function and Social Support of Needs*

1. Daily Living

a) Do you need help with any of these actions? (Yes/No to each individual action)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taking a bath or shower | <input type="checkbox"/> Walking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Going upstairs | <input type="checkbox"/> Washing dishes or clothes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eating | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing checks or keeping track of money |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Getting dressed | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting a ride to the doctor or to see your friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brushing teeth, brushing hair, or shaving | <input type="checkbox"/> Doing house or yard work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Making meals or cooking | <input type="checkbox"/> Going out to visit family or friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Getting out of a bed or a chair | <input type="checkbox"/> Using the phone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shopping and getting food | <input type="checkbox"/> Keeping track of appointments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Using the toilet | |

b) If yes, are you getting all the help you need with these actions?

2. Home Environment

a) Can you live safely and move easily around in your home? (Yes/No)

b) If no, does the place where you live have: (Yes/No to each individual item)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> A door to the outside that locks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good heating | <input type="checkbox"/> Stairs to get into your home, or stairs inside your home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good cooling | <input type="checkbox"/> Elevator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rails for any stairs or ramps | <input type="checkbox"/> Space to use a wheelchair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hot water | <input type="checkbox"/> Clear ways to exit your home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indoor toilet | |

3. Health Literacy

I would like to ask you about how you think you are managing your health conditions:

- Do you need help taking your medicines? (Yes/No)
- Do you need help filling out health forms? (Yes/No)
- Do you need help answering questions during a doctor's visit? (Yes/No)

4. Social Support

Do you have family members or others willing and able to help you when you need it? (Yes/No)

5. Caregiver Stress

Do you ever think your caregiver has a hard time giving you all the help you need? (Yes/No)

6. Potential for Abuse

a) Are you afraid of anyone or is anyone hurting you? (Yes/No)

b) Is anyone using your money without your OK? (Yes/No)

7. Memory

Have you had any changes in thinking, remembering, or making decisions? (Yes/No)

8. Fall Risk

a) Have you fallen in the last month? (Yes/No)

b) Are you afraid of falling? (Yes/No)

9. Financial

Do you sometimes run out of money to pay for food, rent, bills, and medicine? (Yes/No)

10. Social Isolation

Over the past month (30 days), how many days have you felt lonely? (Check one)

None, I never feel lonely

Less than 5 days

More than half the days (more than 15 days)

Most days, I always feel lonely

* Early [evaluation](#) of California's Financial Alignment Initiative showed that dual eligible individuals were not being consistently evaluate for and connected to care coordination.⁶ To begin addressing this need, the California [Department of Health Care Services](#) required all Medicaid managed care plans to include 10 standardized functional and social support assessment questions in their HRA starting on January 1, 2018.^{7,8} These questions were identified, reviewed, and extensively vetted through multiple stakeholder processes.

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