Why Adopt DQA Performance Measures?  
Quality Measures Can Help Programs Improve Quality of Care

The Need to Target Dental Caries

Dental Caries (tooth decay) is the most common chronic disease in children in the United States. In 2009–2010, 14% of children aged 3–5 years, 17% of children aged 6–9 years, and 11% of children aged 13-15 years had untreated tooth decay. Uninsured children have higher rates of caries compared to those with Medicaid. Pain and suffering resulting from dental caries can lead to problems in eating, speaking, attending to learning, and lowering quality of life. Medicaid can achieve better health outcomes for children through prevention and disease management by purchasing the most effective, efficient, timely, equitable, patient-centered and safe healthcare.

What Gets Measured Can Be Changed – Data Driven Policies

Dental caries is a preventable chronic condition and treating its sequela can be time-consuming, costly, and stressful for the child, family, and dentist. Reliable quality measures can help programs and plans develop data-driven policies to improve quality of care while reducing long-term costs. Studies report significant costs for children requiring advanced treatment for caries-related problems in ambulatory surgical facilities. Prevention pays. Programs can use appropriate and relevant quality measures validated through formal testing to:

- Develop policies to target resources to improve utilization requires data on: a.) the current utilization, b.) geographic/county variations, c.) MCO/plan variations, and d.) racial and ethnic disparities
- Develop policies to support appropriate use of evidence-based preventive services requires data on: a.) current provision of evidence-based services, b.) timeliness and frequency of services, and c.) continuity of services
- Develop policies to achieve higher utilization while maintaining or lowering per capita costs requires data on: a.) utilization trends, b.) amounts paid for clinical services, and c.) overall program costs

Why Adopt DQA measures?

A comprehensive strategy is required that assesses access, structure, process, clinical outcomes, population health status, and patient satisfaction. The HEDIS Annual Dental Visit and the CMS 416 Report measure utilization of services. The DQA caries-related measures, developed and validated by the dental community, provide a mechanism to evaluate complementary aspects of utilization, quality, and cost. The lack of use of diagnostic codes in dentistry currently limits outcome measurements, but evidence-based and outcome-based process measures can serve as a useful basis for program improvement.

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3 http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2992503/ Tooth loss and oral health-related quality of life: a systematic review and meta-analysis