

MAGELLAN EXPLORER

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QUALITY IMPROVEMENT QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

MESSAGE TO PROVIDERS

For many of us, the final quarter of the year includes intensified focus on year-end goals, increased stress that may accompany the holidays, and planning stages for the upcoming year.

There are many areas for partnership in the coming months, and we'd like to share some advance information to ensure everyone is prepared. The Opioid Centers of Excellence will implement revised guidelines, effective November 1, 2025. Magellan and other BHMCOs in the state will undertake a Suicide Prevention and Community Resiliency PIP, as well as a Follow-Up After Hospitalization (FUH) and a Readmission Quality Improvement Project.

Wishing everyone warm and healthy holidays.



Warm regards,

Maria Brachelli-Pigeon, LMFT, CPHQ,
Director, Quality Improvement

SEASON'S UPDATE: INCIDENT REPORTING

Magellan introduces a new electronic submission form for incident reporting. The current requirements and reporting categories remain consistent; however, the online submission form appears visually updated. All reports require an accurate provider MIS number and the Member Identification Number (MAID), including the County prefix. Comprehensive training is available under the Patient Safety section at magellanoftpa.com.

NICOTINE REPLACEMENT THERAPY:

WHAT PROVIDERS SHOULD KNOW



Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) remains one of the most effective tools to help individuals quit smoking. By delivering controlled, low doses of nicotine—without the harmful toxins found in cigarettes—NRT helps reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms during the quitting process.

Providers should advise patients not to combine multiple NRT products without consulting a healthcare professional. Typical treatment lasts 8–12 weeks and gradually tapers. Continued use beyond that period may require re-evaluation.

Common withdrawal symptoms include cravings, trouble concentrating, difficulty sleeping, irritability, and restlessness—though experiences vary. Success rates improve significantly when NRT or medication is paired with quit-support tools such as counseling, web or app-based programs, phone coaching, or clinical follow-up.

FDA-Approved Options for Smoking Cessation Nicotine Replacement Products (OTC unless noted):

- ✓ *Patch (OTC):* Slow, steady nicotine release through the skin.
- ✓ *Gum (OTC):* Chew until tingling, then “park” between cheek and gum; repeat for ~30 minutes.
- ✓ *Lozenge (OTC):* Dissolves in the cheek with a tingling sensation as nicotine absorbs.
- ✓ *Inhaler (Rx):* Short, frequent puffs; nicotine absorbs mostly in the throat.
- ✓ *Nasal Spray (Rx):* One spray per nostril for fast absorption.

Prescription Non-Nicotine Medications:

- ✓ *Varenicline:* Reduces pleasure from smoking and decreases cravings.
- ✓ *Bupropion SR:* Helps reduce withdrawal symptoms and cravings.

Important things to consider:

- ⚠ All nicotine-containing products should be stored safely away from children and pets and disposed of according to package instructions.
- ⚠ E-cigarettes/vapes are not FDA-approved for quitting and can expose users to additional harmful substances.
- ⚠ Nicotine pouches, though tobacco-free, are also not FDA-approved cessation aids and may be appealing to youth due to flavors and packaging.

Support Resources:

Quitlines:

- 1-800-QUIT-NOW (English)
- 1-800-DÉJELO-YA (Español)

Apps:

- quitSTART (National Cancer Institute)

Web Support:

- CDC – How to Quit Smoking
- National Cancer Institute – smokefree.gov

Coverage & Cost Assistance:

- PA Statewide Preferred Drug List
- Commonwealth of PA Copay Information

DON'T MISS THIS!

Alignment with the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) Criteria is required of drug and alcohol treatment providers that receive funding for providing treatment services under agreements with Single County Authorities (SCAs) and/or Managed Care Organizations (MCOs). SUD providers of ASAM 1.0, 2.1, and 2.5 will be reviewed in 2026 to ensure that services offered through HealthChoices programming are in alignment with ASAM and Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT).

What does this mean for your program(s)?

Providers will be contacted by the BHMCO and requested to provide documents in advance of the programs policy and procedures. There will also be a medical record review component that will assess for alignment to the core areas of ASAM alignment.

Note: In July 2025, DDAP offered technical assistance for ASAM Ambulatory Level of Care Alignment Review via a recorded webinar that can be accessed here: [The ASAM Criteria 4th Edition](#).

Magellan is requesting that contracted providers attest to watching this recording. Additionally, DDAP shares Q&A resources and sample policies for programs [here](#).

TOOLS FOR SUCCESS: PROVIDER PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Magellan maintains Provider Performance Standards for many HealthChoices funded services. These tools are intended to promote best practices, continuous quality improvement, and improvement of member outcomes. It is important for program leaders to keep current with these Standards, as anything included in these guidelines may be reviewed during Treatment Record Reviews (TRRs).

The Standards will add to current licensing guidelines and regulations and are not intended to replace regulations. Providers are encouraged to refer to these documents and utilize the Standards in the development of internal quality improvement and monitoring activities. These Standards will periodically be reviewed and revised. To review the list of available Standards, please click [here](#).

FEATURED: LANGUAGE NEEDS

The following data on the top 5 language preferences by county is taken from information on “members served.” Members directly provide their language preference, when they enroll or re-enroll for HealthChoices Medical Assistance (Medicaid). Please note that having a preference for a language other than English is not the same as, and does not imply, Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

Cambria and Northampton County’s top-5 languages remained the same as in 2023. In Bucks County, Ukrainian replaced Armenian as #5. This increase in Ukrainian had been expected since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine and the influx of refugees to several areas in Pennsylvania, but 2024 was the first time this was observed in the HealthChoices data. In Lehigh County, French replaced Armenian as the #5 preferred language. In Montgomery County, Bengali moved from 5th to 4th place, and Arabic moved into 5th place, replacing Korean in the top-5.

As was the case in the 2022 and 2023 data, Spanish was the second most preferred language in Bucks, Lehigh, Montgomery, and Northampton Counties in 2024. Thai was the second most preferred language in Cambria County. Thai was the third most preferred language in Lehigh, Montgomery, and Northampton Counties. Russian was the third most preferred language among Bucks County members in both 2023 and 2024. Lehigh County continues to have the highest percentage of members who state that they prefer to use Spanish, increasing from 20.02% to 20.81%. The percentage of members in Northampton County preferring Spanish also increased from 8.58% in 2023 to 9.31% in 2024.

In 2024, Armenian only appeared in the top-5 preferred languages in Cambria County, while in 2023, Armenian was in the top-5 for Bucks, Cambria, and Lehigh Counties. The small increase in Armenian in 2023 appears to have been reversed in 2024. In both 2023 and 2024, Arabic was in the top-5 in Lehigh, Montgomery, and Northampton Counties.

Magellan researched external data on the Thai language and Thai immigrants in Pennsylvania. This was because Thai appears as one of the top preferred languages among Magellan members, but has not been appearing in the above external sources. The following source, <https://zipatlas.com/us/pa/zip-code-comparison/percentage-thai-population.htm> shows the Thai population by percentage in each zip code. The following zip codes are among those with the highest percentage of Thai residents in Pennsylvania:

Zip code	Municipality	County	% of population who are Thai by Nationality
18915	Colmar, Line Lexington (Hilltown, New Britain, Hatfield)	Montgomery, some Bucks	19.14%
19406	King of Prussia, Gulph Mills, West Norriton	Montgomery	12.41%
19440	Hatfield, Line Lexington (Hilltown, New Britain, Hatfield), Wynmere Hunt, Yorkshire Commons	Montgomery,	10.65%
19020	Bensalem, Andalusia, Cornwells Heights, Eddington	Bucks	9.76%
18031	Breinigsville	Lehigh	9.59%

This website states that its data is drawn from “various sources, including the US Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and other reputable organizations.”

The data source on this website is not clear, and it appears that these percentages reflect people who identify their nationality as Thai (they are not necessarily immigrants from Thailand). But since it might be likely that Magellan’s Thai speakers live in communities with larger Thai populations (by their identified nationality), it is useful to identify communities where more Thai individuals live, so Magellan might know which providers might encounter people who speak Thai, who might have needs for language assistance.

Magellan’s providers are expected to demonstrate cultural competency and sensitivity. This includes respecting diversity and being attentive and sensitive to how cultural issues can impact a person’s recovery, attitudes about behavioral health services, and experience of treatment. Providers of any gender, gender identity, race, or ethnicity can, and do, deliver culturally competent, culturally sensitive, services. To read more about available resources, click [here](#).

To help enhance provider cultural competency, Magellan has offered cultural competency resources on the website, including information on training available, language assistance, and the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Healthcare (CLAS Standards).



Top Five Language Preferences in Each County for 2024

Bucks		
English	15360	96.23%
Spanish	252	1.58%
Russian	113	0.71%
Thai	57	0.36%
Ukrainian	20	0.13%

Cambria		
English	7745	98.05%
Thai	36	0.46%
Spanish	19	0.24%
Persian	4	0.05%
Armenian	3	0.05%

Lehigh		
English	13669	77.35%
Spanish	3677	20.81%
Thai	77	0.44%
Arabic	40	0.23%
French	11	0.06%

Montgomery		
English	18279	94.90%
Spanish	584	3.03%
Thai	64	0.33%
Bengali	32	0.17%
Arabic	30	0.16%

Northampton		
English	10119	89.01%
Spanish	1059	9.31%
Thai	57	0.50%
Czech	14	0.12%
Arabic	11	0.10%

UPCOMING TRAININGS



Addressing Tobacco Use in Behavioral Health Services

There are trainings available from the PA Statewide Tobacco-Free Recovery Initiative. Registration is free for these trainings. Click [here](#) to see the full listing of trainings available in the coming months.



Opioid Centers of Excellence (COE)

Fidelity Guidelines were published on August 1, 2024. Each COE has until January 2026 to fully implement these guidelines into their practice. In preparation for full implementation, the Clinical Contract Advisor provided training and technical assistance to all COEs in the MBH Network. There are six sections to the Guidelines. The Guidelines can be accessed [here](#).



Recommended for OP, IOP, PHP Substance Use treatment providers: DDAP offered technical assistance for ASAM Ambulatory Level of Care Alignment Review via a recorded webinar that can be accessed here:

[The ASAM Criteria 4th Edition](#)



Please contact Anita Kelly at ALKelly@magellanhealth.com for more information



MEMBER ADVISORY GROUPS



Dates/locations shared at

[Member Advisory Groups | Magellan of PA](#)

MAGELLAN IN THE MEDIA

[“Behavioral Health Matters”](#)



Magellan

The show aims to promote positive mental health, increase our understanding of behavioral health topics and services, and reduce stigma. Future episodes post every 4-6 weeks.

Kudos of the Quarter!

Magellan maintains a process to recognize individuals throughout our network who go above and beyond for members. Magellan extends a warm thank you to the following individuals for their demonstrated commitment to the HealthChoices community.

We appreciate our partners in quality and regard this forum as one way Magellan can highlight exemplary acts of service for our members. You'll see these names again, as all providers and individuals that are honored through the ASC process will be highlighted at the Provider Town Hall.

Thank you!

Toni Keaton at Haven Behavioral Services:

Did a great job of managing a very complex case, resulting in a smooth transition to a nursing home placement.

Dr. Burkins, Carrie Deprill and the team at Lehigh Valley ACT:

Have collaborated closely with the hospital in planning for medications and discharge to the community, even driving medications to the hospital that were not available there.

Angela Burkey at Pyramid Healthcare:

Presented a thorough, thoughtful, well-presented, client-centered ASAM assessment.

Zachary Lugiano at Pyramid Healthcare:

Performed a very comprehensive, client focused ASAM assessment.

Matt Wilson at Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center:

Does a fantastic job with having the required information, and finding out answers to any questions, making doing Utilization Review a pleasure. He is always prepared, professional, and excellent at his job!

Korin Danchise-Curtis at St Luke's Penn Foundation:

Was professional, pleasant, and thorough with all of the clinical information for a pre-cert.

Sharon LeFaver-Franckowiak at Tower Behavioral Health-Reading:

Has worked closely, professionally, and promptly with Magellan, the community provider, and other stakeholders to support a member who has had a long inpatient stay, in a complex discharge planning process.

Brandy Bortnyik Hegedus at Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center:

Consistently goes above and beyond, putting her heart into her work, especially in discharge planning. She ensures referrals are made to all needed services during discharge planning.

Bryan Cunningham at Pyramid Quakertown:

(Cited twice this quarter!) Always very prepared with very thorough ASAM assessments. He is always professional and a pleasure to work with, describing member's symptoms, level of insight, and goals in rich detail, painting a full picture of the member.

The Horizons IBHS Team with Child & Family Focus:

This team is commended for their fast response in support of a family's urgent needs.

Tina Efthimiou at Horsham Clinic:

Managed two very complex cases, with discharge plans that honor the members' rights and wishes, as well as family dynamics and needs. Extremely collaborative with the families, Magellan, providers, and County stakeholders.

Emilie Hempstead and Donna Sutton at White Deer Run:

Their combined efforts to improve the timeliness, content, and consistency of ASAM assessments, along with clinical notes has been a success!

Lauren Hostetter at Horizon House- Robbins Bower:

Went above and beyond to secure a comprehensive, clinically effective aftercare plan for our member, which included coordinating with multiple physical and behavioral health providers, and other resources, in order to ensure a successful transition to the community.

Bernadette Gaumer at Pathway to Healing Counseling Services:

Went above and beyond for a child member in need of trauma therapy. Bernadette was able to prioritize the case to get the member quickly set up with a child therapist that specializes in trauma.

Teal Messner at Pyramid:

Started making referrals to residential PHPs early in the member's stay, and making follow-up calls to providers, ultimately securing a timely admission in time for discharge.

Steve Ellis at Belmont Behavioral Health:

Steve consistently shows how much he cares for our members. He meets with the members, knows their treatment plans, and takes every review seriously.

Taylor Behavioral Health Services:

Documents clearly supported the member's needs. The treatment plan included skill transfer goals for both caregivers and school staff.