

Leading the Way on Lead

NJ Physicians Share their Best Practices for Increasing Lead Screening Rates

As part of a joint collaborative effort to increase lead testing scores among the providers who care for NJ Family Care members, five Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) in New Jersey joined forces to examine the processes and procedures followed by providers with superior lead testing scores/rates.

The first step in this effort was to identify providers with overall lead testing rates/scores greater than or equal to 80%. Once the providers were identified, the next step was to conduct interviews with these providers to determine a set of "Best Practices" which can be easily used/replicated to increase lead screening rates.

The MCO collaborative is proud to publish a compilation of Best Practices as shared with us by New Jersey practitioners caring for this young, vulnerable population

Internal Office procedures/processes

- When a lab order for a lead test is given to the parent/guardian, follow-up in 1 month to ensure testing was completed.
- Offer Saturday appointments for lead testing with a nurse and walk-in appointments.
- If no available results for a lead test from an outside lab, this triggers a call to the parent/guardian.
- Confirm current and emergency contact information at each visit.
- All staff trained on caring for crying child, MedTox and verbal risk assessments.
- Build trusting rapport with parent/guardian, bilingual staff in office, cultural sensitivity and empathetic care.
- Having in-office lead testing with filter-paper method (MedTox) makes a positive impact on compliance and decreases missed opportunities. Advantageous for members with poor venous access and non-compliant members after repeated scripts are given to parent/guardian.

Parent/Guardian Education

- Discuss the importance of early lead screening during all visits, both well and sick visits.
- Discuss the dangers of not being tested, the possibility of behavioral and cognitive issues.
- Make written information about lead testing available on the office patient portal.
- Provide posters with lead information in exam rooms and have written education available.
- Stress that lead testing is mandatory in the state of NJ for children under the age of 6 years.
- Provide a written summary of the visit to parent/guardian that includes outstanding items to be completed, such as lead testing.

Outreach Techniques

- Send appointment reminders one (1) week and one (1) day before scheduled visit.
- If missed appointment, follow-up in 1 week.
- Calls to parent/guardian when child is due for lead test.
- Make multiple attempts (3) at contacting parent/guardian and using various modalities, phone, text, email. If still no response, letters forwarded to child's home.
- Try reaching both parents and if still unable to contact, try emergency contact.

Thank you for your assistance and for providing high-quality care to your patients, our members.