



POLICY OPTIONS IN BRIEF

There are 6 policy options in the report for consideration.

Option: Direct DMAS to develop a plan to incorporate the National Diabetes Prevention Program as a covered service within the Medicaid State Plan.

(Option 1, page 8)

Option: Request HIRC and BOI to define nutritional counseling in the EHB benchmark plan.

(Option 2, page 10)

Option: Request HIRC and BOI conduct assessments to include the following services in the Essential Health Benefits benchmark plan when medically necessary:

- Medical nutrition therapy
- Weight loss medication
- Bariatric surgery

(Options 3, 5, and 6; pages 10-16)

Option: Direct DMAS to remove service limits for medical nutrition therapy when treating qualifying or eligible medical conditions.

(Option 4, page 11)

Obesity and Eating Disorder Prevention and Treatment

Obesity Policy Options and Findings

FINDINGS IN BRIEF

Coverage of obesity prevention and early intervention services varies by insurer

Virginia Medicaid currently covers preventive services for children and adults, including physical exams and nutrition counseling. Two Medicaid MCOs piloted an evidence-based prevention program, the Diabetes Prevention Program, that successfully targets people who are at high risk for type 2 diabetes by promoting a change in lifestyle factors for modest weight loss. The program could benefit people with obesity; however, this program is not currently a covered Medicaid benefit. The Virginia EHB benchmark plan covers counseling services related to nutrition as a preventive health benefit but does not cover behavioral interventions for obesity. Some individual and small group plans also exclude medical nutrition therapy as a treatment for obesity.

Weight loss medications are not covered in the Virginia Essential Health Benefits benchmark plan and allowed under strict criteria for Medicaid

The Virginia EHB benchmark plan outlines services which must be covered by individual and small group plans. Also, the Virginia EHB benchmark plan specifically excludes coverage for weight loss drugs. Consequently, there are no individual or small group plans that cover these services. Medicaid requires prior authorization for weight loss drugs.

Weight loss surgery is not covered in the Virginia Essential Health Benefits benchmark plan and allowed under strict criteria for Medicaid

The Virginia EHB benchmark plan specifically excludes coverage for weight loss surgery, which is similar to most states. Twenty-three states cover bariatric surgery through their state EHB benchmark. Coverage is limited in the individual and small group market. Virginia Medicaid covers bariatric surgery when medically necessary.