

**1. Q: What is the *Community Checkup* report?**

**A:** The *Community Checkup* report is the one place where everyone in King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish and Thurston counties can go to easily compare certain aspects of health care in the region. The *Community Checkup* report includes measures for clinics and medical groups, hospitals and now health plans as of October 2009. The report will be updated and expanded to encourage continued improvement over time. The *Community Checkup* lays a foundation for all of us to build upon as a community, working together to improve local health care value.

**2. Q: Which health plans have volunteered to be a part of the *Community Checkup*?**

**A:** This *Community Checkup* report on health plans shows results for six health plans that volunteered to participate in this process. We applaud these organizations and their support for improving quality and value in health care. Their participation—and the active involvement of public and private employers—has been vital to enabling this first *Community Checkup* on health plans, which is the most comprehensive report of its kind for this region.

The six participating health plans are:

- Aetna (PPO)
- CIGNA HealthCare (PPO)
- Group Health Cooperative (HMO)
- Premera Blue Cross (PPO)
- Regence Blue Shield (PPO)
- United Healthcare (PPO)

The employers that sponsored the health plan evaluation are:

- Alaska Air Group
- The Boeing Company
- City of Seattle
- King County
- Pierce County
- Port Blakeley Companies
- Puget Sound Energy
- Recreational Equipment, Inc.
- Snohomish County
- WA State Health Care Authority

**3. Q: What does the *Community Checkup* measure for health plans?**

**A:** The newly added information on health plans is based on results from the eValue8™ tool developed and maintained by the National Business Coalition on Health. This tool looks at numerous areas – organized into seven categories – in which health plans are already actively involved and can have significant influence in the value of local health care:

- a) **Plan Profile / Overview** (national accreditation and reporting of health plan quality measures, benefit design, addressing health disparities);
- b) **Consumer / Member Engagement** (support for members to promote health and high value care, member surveys on their experience with the health plan and with providers);
- c) **Provider Measurement** (tracking and support to promote quality improvement by providers);
- d) **Pharmaceutical Management** (supporting cost-effective use of medications, including supporting members to stay on prescribed medications);
- e) **Prevention and Health Promotion;**
- f) **Chronic Disease Management;** and
- g) **Behavioral Health Programs.**

**4. Q: What does the health plan information in *Community Checkup* show us?**

**A:** This report shows how health plans play a vital role in influencing the health of their members and local health care value. It describes several important areas, and the priorities which large employers (and others in the Alliance) would like the health plans in this region to focus on improving, in part by following evidence-based national standards. Over time, the whole community will gain even more insight from this report as health plans engage more in measurement and reporting via national surveys. The goal is to create the ability for everyone to compare health plan performance across this market and with other health plans nationally.

**5. Q: Does this report show us which health plan is best and which one is worst?**

**A:** No. This first report is about setting expectations and encouraging discussion about shared priorities for eventually being able to consistently compare health plans across this market and with others nationally. There are many dimensions to this report and some health plans appear to be stronger in some areas than others. However, considering the benchmarks in each chart which show the scores from the nation's best performing health plan (HMO and PPO) that participated in this same evaluation process, everyone in this region has room to improve how they meet the expectations set forth through this process.

Because this is the first report of its kind, there are many reasons why the results may not reflect actual experience with a given health plan. Scores in this report may be affected by many factors, including:

- whether the health plan has pursued NCQA or other national accreditation,
- whether the health plan measures and reports how they are doing on national quality measures (i.e., HEDIS) and a national survey for health plan members on patient experience (i.e., CAHPS survey),
- the completeness of the information and data submitted by the health plan during the evaluation process,
- how that description and data from the health plan were scored by NBCH, and
- other information, if any, submitted by the health plan before draft scores were finalized.

As the first public report, it is premature to use the results reach specific conclusions about the local activities of any health plan; rather, the purpose is to have health plans to show improvement over time on the shared expectations and priorities based on national standards.

**6. Q: What problem is the Alliance trying to address by measuring health plan activity?**

**A:** Health plans have many products, programs and services that can influence the health of members and local health care value. There has been little or no publicly-available information about health plans, based on national standards and consistent survey and reporting tools, that everyone in the community can easily access. By adding health plans to the *Community Checkup* report, the Alliance is encouraging local discussion and setting expectations that will eventually enable a consistent comparison of health plans across this market and with others nationally. As with *Community Checkup* measures for medical groups and hospitals, the expectations are based on national standards with the intent to increase accountability and spur improvement over time.

**7. Q: How will this help to improve quality and value in local health care?**

**A:** Research shows that when reports on health care performance are public, there is even more improvement than if reports are kept private. With one regional report that we all use to assess and improve local health care value, everyone in the community can do their part to align decisions around effective care as defined in national evidence-based guidelines.

**8. Q: How should this health plan report be used?**

**A:** This report can help everyone in the community understand the important ways that health plans can influence the health of members and local health care value. Given that 2009 is the first year of publicly sharing these comparative summary results, the following rules apply to organizations that want to use the information in this report:

1. Each health plan may communicate about their own summary-level eValue8™ results; however, health plans are prohibited from using any of the results that reference or compare to another health plan's results in any public communication or promotional materials.
2. All organizations are encouraged to direct people to the *Community Checkup* report website to see the comparison of summary-level results from eValue8™.
3. Any communication regarding eValue8™ results must follow the media guidelines of the National Business Coalition on Health (see [www.nbch.org/eValue8/Media\\_Protocol](http://www.nbch.org/eValue8/Media_Protocol)).

In the future, these rules may change per direction from the Alliance Board or NBCH.

**9. Q: How was the eValue8 measurement tool developed?**

**A:** The tool was developed and is routinely updated by the National Business Coalition on Health (NBCH) with input from organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Please address specific questions about the tool to Dennis White, NBCH Vice President, Value-Based Purchasing, at 202.775.9300 ext 18.

**10. Q: Is Puget Sound the only region using eValue8 to compare and report on health plan activity?**

**A:** No. Several communities around the country publish reports based on the eValue8 process of measuring health plan activities. More than 20 coalitions and more than 100 health plans across the country participate in this process.

**11. Q: What is the Puget Sound Health Alliance?**

**A:** The Puget Sound Health Alliance is a private, non-profit organization – a team effort of those who provide, pay for and use health care services, working together to improve the quality of patient care for a healthier community, at a price more people can afford. The Alliance is neither a regulator nor a purchasing coalition. More than 150 organizations from the public and private sectors belong to the Alliance, representing more than 2 million covered people in the five counties. To see the *Community Checkup* report, go to [www.WACommunityCheckup.org](http://www.WACommunityCheckup.org)