North Carolina

Blue Premier℠ MSK HiVE FAQ

What is Blue Premier Musculoskeletal (MSK) HiVE?

The Blue Premier MSK HiVE is a value-based care program for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (Blue Cross NC) members undergoing musculoskeletal care. This program is a partnership with Health Innovation Value Enterprise of the Carolinas, LLC (HiVE), a joint venture between EmergeOrtho, OrthoCarolina and SCA Health, to advance value-based care in the orthopedics space, increase the quality of care and reduce the overall cost of care for both patients and health plans.

The value-based care arrangement shifts financial accountability for MSK care to HiVE and will optimize the health care journey of patients receiving orthopedic care at EmergOrtho and OrthoCarolina. By promoting seamless communication, sharing of best practices and evidence-based protocols, we are enhancing patient care coordination among orthopedic specialists, primary care providers (PCPs) and other health care professionals involved in a member's treatment journey.

Why is Blue Cross NC offering this?

Specialty care accounts for roughly 90% of professional health care costs.[1] MSK spend is among the top specialty spend categories for commercial Blue Cross NC members.[2] This program is aimed at improving member outcomes, avoiding unnecessary surgeries, improving quality and lowering costs.

Some key points about MSK health care costs:

- Back conditions are the most expensive, accounting for 29% of the total MSK bill.[3]
- Wear and tear conditions make up nearly two-thirds of all MSK-related spending.[3]
- A 1% reduction in surgical utilization would equate to a 3.4% decrease in spend.[4]

These rising costs highlight the financial challenges faced by both health care providers and patients. By offering Blue Premier MSK HiVE, we are aligning provider payment models for better outcomes and lowering the costs of care for members with MSK conditions.

How is this related to the Blue Premier program?

Blue Premier MSK HiVE is a feature in the industry-leading Blue Premier value-based care initiative portfolio from Blue Cross NC that pays health care providers for meeting quality and cost standards. Increasing the ecosystem of accountability and aligning the incentives of specialty providers around value through specialty alternate payment models (APM) is essential to the continued success and viability of our statewide accountable primary care network. If designed well, specialty APMs allow specialty providers to get incentive payments from reduced total cost of care – a win-win for the payer and provider.

MSK care is a significant driver of high costs. These high costs result from lack of optimization of treatment, site of care and potentially avoidable surgeries. By leveraging provider-facing intervention that will focus on optimizing care for members receiving MSK services at EmergeOrtho and OrthoCarolina, Blue Premier MSK will improve a member's total health and contribute to medical expense savings.

What is the impact on Blue Premier providers?

There is no impact to a Blue Premier provider's accountable care organization (ACO) attribution; it specifically excludes members attributed to a Blue Premier ACO. The current ACO target, shared savings and quality performance and payout is not impacted by Blue Premier MSK. Each program – ACO and MSK – is evaluated and reconciled distinctly from the other. Members cannot be attributed to both a Blue Premier ACO and Blue Premier MSK HiVE.

Is this a shared savings model?

HiVE is at risk for a share of financial savings or losses which measure performance. If a provider's accountable population realizes high-quality care at a lower-than-anticipated cost, the provider shares in the cost savings. If a provider's accountable population does not meet Blue Cross NC's quality metrics and/or is high cost, the provider may earn less savings or even pay Blue Cross NC a share of the losses, which would then be allocated as appropriate to Administrative Services Only (ASO) groups if applicable.

Does this program cover all members in North Carolina and nationally?

The Blue Premier MSK HiVE program only includes members in North Carolina.

Who is eligible?

Members who are not attributed to Blue Premier ACOs and are in a commercial segment (self insured employers, fully insured employers and individual under 65) are eligible. We may expand to additional members in the future.

What percentage of Blue Cross NC's total commercial population will be eligible?

The initial focus of this program will be those eligible members that are receiving MSK care at EmergeOrtho and OrthoCarolina. This represents a small percentage of our current commercial population, but we may expand to additional members in the future.

Who is not eligible?

At this time, non-eligible members include:

- Members living outside of North Carolina
- Blue Premier members assigned to a PCP

How will members learn about this program?

Members are attributed to the program by meeting the eligibility criteria and receiving services at EmergeOrtho and OrthoCarolina. Members will not receive outreach nor membership materials from HiVE. Members will not be aware that they are a HiVE member.

How are members assigned to a Blue Premier MSK HiVE provider?

Members are attributed to the MSK HiVE program by being a Blue Cross NC member in an eligible segment with a qualifying claim and by receiving care at a HiVE location (EmergeOrtho or OrthoCarolina).

What are the core offerings to members?

HiVE is a provider-facing intervention and will focus on optimizing care for members receiving MSK care at EmergeOrtho and OrthoCarolina. While members will not be aware that their MSK care is falling under the HiVE program or receive direct intervention from HiVE, they will interact with a provider that is taking additional measures to ensure member outcomes improve and cost is being reduced. This will be done through enhanced training for physical therapists (PTs), site of care optimization and tracking and benchmarking of quality measures. Members may not see it, but they will be receiving MSK care that is accountable.

What kind of reporting will employers receive?

Self insured employer groups with Blue Cross NC coverage will have access to reporting. This report shows the number and percent of attributed membership by Blue Premier provider organization with value-based charges and total charges to date. Savings reports are available on a quarterly basis. The reports indicate shared savings by the participating groups. Employers will have access to an annual quality performance report at the end of each performance year.

Where can I find more information on the Blue Premier MSK HiVE program in Administrative Service Agreement (ASA) contracts?

You can find more detail on Blue Premier MSK HiVE in the value-based section of your ASA as it falls into this category of programs.

1 Dorn, S. D. (2022, June 14). 4 ways to improve specialty health care in the U.S. Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2022/06/4-ways-to-improve-specialty-health-care-in-the-u-s (Accessed June 2025).

2 Blue Cross NC Internal Data, Provider P360 - Professional & Facility Dashboard, 12 months ending December 31, 2024.

3 Americans In Motion: The Total Cost of Managing Musculoskeletal Conditions. Evernorth Health Services. (2022, August 11). www.evernorth.com/articles/musculoskeletal-disorder-costs-and-cares (Accessed June 2025).

4 Chad Mather and Christen Connell. (2024, March 14). The Future of Musculoskeletal Care in North Carolina [PowerPoint slides]. Department Name, SCA Health.

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