



January 23, 2025

RE: Depression Screening and Follow-Up (DSF) Measure

Dear Direct Network Providers,

Depression is a widespread mental health condition that affects millions of individuals. Early detection is crucial for effective management and improved outcomes. As part of our Quality Improvement Program and to meet regulatory requirements, L.A. Care Health Plan (L.A. Care) monitors and tracks the HEDIS® **Depression Screening and Follow-Up (DSF) Measure (DSF)**. Currently, screening rates remain low, which we believe is largely due to the challenges in converting the screening instrument into a code that can be captured. Addressing this issue and improving your rates will not only support better patient outcomes but also contribute to increasing your Value Initiative IPA Performance (VIIP) + Pay-for-Performance (P4P) payment.

Depression Screening Instruments

- We recommend using standardized depression screening instruments such as the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-2) or (PHQ-9).
- The PHQ-2 consists of two (2) questions, while the PHQ-9 includes nine (9) questions. Both are widely accepted and validated for depression screening.

Screening Instrument	Positive finding
Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9)	Total score ≥ 10
Patient Health Questionnaire-2 (PHQ-2)	Total score ≥ 3

- If PHQ-2/PHQ-9 is built into your Electronic Medical Record (EMR), record the patient answers, or print out the form and ask patients to complete all questions while sitting in the waiting or exam room.
- These questionnaires are a first-step approach to screening for depression and do not establish final diagnosis or monitor depression severity.

Timely Submission to Medical Groups/IPAs

- All depression screening information must be submitted without delay. Timely submission helps in coordination of care and ensures that patients receive the necessary follow-up and support.

Coding Depression Screening

- Submit either one of the codes below. Please use the appropriate codes according to the service that was rendered.



Direct Network
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Description	LOINC Code
Patient Health Questionnaire 9 item (PHQ-9) total score [Reported]	44261-6
Patient Health Questionnaire 2 item (PHQ-2) total score [Reported]	55758-7

- If screened positive, follow up must be done within 30 days. Submit the appropriate visit code for the follow up as claim/encounter.
- Data submitted through claims/encounters will not be captured as compliant for the initial screening.
- Providers that utilize Cozeva may upload depression screenings on the platform.

Required Data Elements Needed by L.A. Care

- Member ID
- Member DOB
- Service Date
- PHQ Assessment Score
- LOINC code for the screening and visit code (i.e. Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) for the follow-up

CPT Codes for Depression Follow-Up

When billing, ensure that the depression follow-up is associated with an encounter that includes at least one billable CPT code.

Additional HEDIS Resources

- <https://www.lacare.org/providers/provider-resources/tools-toolkits/hedis-resources>
- https://www.lacare.org/sites/default/files/la6539_dsf-e_sns-e_20240904.pdf

Thank you for your dedication to patient well-being. If you have any questions or require further assistance, please reach out to Quality@lacare.org.

Thank you for your continued partnership in improving patient care.

Sincerely,

L.A. Care Health Plan

Boost Depression Screening Rates and **Increase Your VIIP P4P Payments!**

Depression screenings and follow-ups are vital for early diagnosis and continuous patient care, ensuring treatment plans, and meeting regulatory requirements. Proper documentation and reporting can improve healthcare quality!

1 Administer :: PHQ-2 or PHQ-9 for initial screening



2 Interpret Scores :: A PHQ-9 score of ≥ 10 indicates a positive result
 :: A PHQ-2 score of ≥ 3 indicates a positive result



3 Document and Code :: PHQ-9 LOINC Code: 44261-6
 :: PHQ-2 LOINC Code: 55787-7
 *A LOINC code is needed for both screening and positive PHQ results



4 Submit Member Information To Your IPA/PPG :: Member ID
 :: Member DOB
 :: Date of Service
 :: Screening results/scores
 :: LOINC codes



5 Follow-Up :: Ensure appropriate care is arranged based on screening results.

