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**PURCHASER TOOLKIT**

***Contracting with Health Plans***

*To serve employers that are purchasing health care on behalf of their employees, we offer the following guidance on contracting with health plans. While different approaches will work for different employers, it’s important to know that hospitals pay more attention* ***if employers work together****. Many communities already have a coalition of like-minded employers and purchasers that are committed to driving transparency and improvement in local hospitals. Visit our website for more information about the* [*Leapfrog Regional Leaders*](http://www.leapfroggroup.org/employers-purchasers/regional-leaders) *in your area.*

**SHIFT HOSPITAL PERFORMANCE**



**A Commitment to Transparency, Accountability and Improvement**

Payers and consumers both need to know the rates of serious medical errors like mortality rates, falls, infection rates, or surgical mistakes. Ask plans to demonstrate their **commitment to transparency and quality reporting** by requiring that network hospitals report key safety and quality data to publicly-accessible databases like the Leapfrog Hospital Survey. Plans can offer a financial incentive to those hospitals that choose to report, or penalize or exclude those that do not.

Steering Employees Toward Safer Care. Altarum Institute. 2012

Ask plans to demonstrate they **enforce accountability** for hospitals to improve their safety and quality practices. For example, you can ask your health plan to:

1. Include a penalty for network hospitals that receive low Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grades or perform poorly on the Leapfrog Hospital Survey. Conversely, health plans can offer a bonus to hospitals that meet certain quality and safety standards.
2. Require that the plan’s quality or medical directors meet annually with network hospital executives to discuss opportunities for improvement.
3. Require that the hospital abides to a “[Never Events](https://www.leapfroggroup.org/influencing/never-events)” policy for serious medical errors that includes the following actions:

* Apologize to the patient and family
* Waive all costs
* Report to an external agency
* Conduct a root-cause analysis
* Interview patients and families involved
* Inform the patient and family of the action(s) that the hospital will take
* Have a protocol in place to provide support for caregivers involved
* Perform an annual review to ensure compliance
* Make a copy of this policy available

**SHIFT CONSUMER CHOICE**

**Communicating with Enrollees**

Employers can play the crucial role of alerting employees about hospital safety. By building awareness that employees have a choice of hospital, employers can have a significant impact on the health outcomes of their employees.

Work with your health plan to define and implement an **enrollee communications strategy** that educates enrollees about key issues of safety and quality in a meaningful and easy-to-understand way. Ask your plan to:

Steering Employees Toward Safer Care. Altarum Institute. 2012

1. Make Leapfrog Hospital Survey results, Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grades, and other data on network hospitals available to members electronically.
2. Create easy-to-use search tools for members to identify hospitals that are performing better on key indicators of patient safety and quality.
3. Design enrollee education materials that demonstrate the importance of being an empowered and informed consumer.
4. Use digital and social media to engage members and keep them up-to-date on the latest information on patient safety.

You can also help ensure that your employees are getting the safest care possible by working with your plan to design a benefit package that successfully steers employees and dependents toward hospitals that have demonstrated their commitment to transparency, accountability, and improvement.

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**For more information on how employers can work with health plans and hospitals to improve outcomes and lower costs, download the free white paper from The Altarum Institute,** [**“Steering Employees Toward Safer Care.”**](http://www.hospitalsafetyscore.org/media/file/SteeringEmployeesSaferCare_LeapFrog_WhitePaper.pdf)