

Blueprint for Quality

Getting quality healthcare has a high value with most Americans. APWU Health Plan supports that value by helping members find ways to make the healthcare system easier to navigate and by providing quality choices.

One way the Health Plan does this is by continually working to expand the number of providers available in its Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) so that there are many good alternatives when selecting a doctor or hospital. PPO providers help ensure quality, because they are credentialed to meet state, industry organization or PPO network standards; and PPO doctors are screened to be sure they have not been subject to disciplinary actions. The Health Plan also provides a Hospital Quality Guide on the online PPO Directory for assistance in locating hospitals rated best for quality.

Quality is high with PPOs, and you also save money because PPOs discount their charges and the Health Plan pays a higher percentage of the cost. However, you are covered for any provider, in or out of the PPO network, so that you have the greatest access to doctors and hospitals. Additionally, a referral is not required when a specialist is needed. You can select any doctor you wish and make an appointment directly, so there is no delay or limitation to seeking specialists' care.

Patients play an important role in their care by being proactive, asking questions, and making informed choices. The following are suggestions from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality to check for quality healthcare:

Look for a doctor who:

- Is rated to give quality care.
- Has the training and background that meet your needs.
- Takes steps to prevent illness—for example talks to you about quitting smoking, exercising, etc.
- Has privileges at the hospital of your choice.
- Is part of your health plan.
- Encourages you to ask questions.
- Listens to you.
- Explains things clearly.
- Treats you with respect.

When choosing a treatment, make sure you understand:

- What your diagnosis is.
- Whether treatment is really needed at this time.
- What your treatment options are.
- Whether the treatment options are based on the latest scientific evidence.
- The benefits and risks of each treatment.
- The cost of each treatment.

Look for a hospital that:

- Is accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.
- Is rated highly by state or consumer or other groups.
- Is one where your doctor has privileges, if that is important to you.
- Is covered by your health plan.

- Has experience with your condition.
- Has success with your condition.
- Checks and works to improve its own quality of care.