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## ***Correspondence Memorandum***

**Date:** April 11, 2023

**To:** Group Insurance Board

**From:** Molly Dunks, Disease Management & Wellness Program Manager  
 Tricia Sieg, Pharmacy Program Manager  
 Office of Strategic Health Policy

**Subject:** Pilot Programs Report and 2024 Recommendations

The Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) requests the Group Insurance Board (Board) approve the following pilot programs for 2024:

- ***It's Your Health: Diabetes*** via Navitus/WebMD,
- **Acupuncture benefits** via Dean Health Plan (DHP),
- **Diabetes management programs** via Quartz and Security Health Plan,
- **Doula services** via Quartz, and
- ***Therapy360*** via Quartz.

### **Background**

Pilot programs present an opportunity for health plans to offer innovative programs that are not currently included in the Group Health Insurance Program (GHIP) Uniform Benefits (UB). Additional information about the pilot program policy for health plans was shared at the May 18, 2022 meeting ([Ref. GIB | 05.18.22 | 5D](#)).

For non-health plan vendors, pilot programs allow staff and the Board to evaluate the impact of new program offerings that were not included in the original contract for a limited time or with a subset of the population.

### **Current Pilot Programs**

Table 1 includes a summary of the five current pilot programs.

**Table 1. Current Pilot Programs**

<b>Vendor</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Years Implemented</b>
DHP	<i>Living Healthy Plus</i> (diabetes management, reducing cost sharing for related medical services)	2019–2023
DHP	Acupuncture benefit	2020–2023
Network Health	Acupuncture benefit	2021–2023

Reviewed and approved by Eileen Mallow, Director, Office of Strategic Health Policy  
 Electronically Signed 04/26/2023

Board	Mtg Date	Item #
GIB	05.17.23	3D

Vendor	Program	Years Implemented
Navitus/WebMD	<i>It's Your Health: Diabetes</i> (reduced cost sharing for diabetes-related pharmaceuticals)	2019–2023
WebMD	<i>meQuilibrium</i> (stress management and resilience building program)	2022–2023

DHP

Since 2019, non-high-deductible health plan (non-HDHP) members with DHP have no cost sharing for diabetes-related office and lab visits through the *Living Healthy Plus* program. 100 members have participated, and 48 were continuously enrolled from 2019 through 2021. According to an analysis by Merative, the Board’s data warehouse vendor, 83.3% of the 48 continuously enrolled members have maintained or improved their disease stage (see Attachment A). Due to the timing of claims, annual data is only available through 2021.

DHP is discontinuing *Living Healthy Plus* beginning in 2024. They are undergoing an analysis of whether the benefit should be included in their standard commercial coverage in the future.

Secondly, DHP implemented an acupuncture pilot program beginning in 2020 as an alternate pain management treatment option with a goal to reduce dependency on opioid use. It is currently included in DHP’s commercial benefits. Any member can have 10 acupuncture visits per year from in-network providers. See Table 2 for utilization data from 2020 and 2021. Limitations continue to be related to contracting challenges with providers due to billing practices. DHP is interested in continuing the pilot program for GHIP members in 2024 and will review the ability to evaluate additional metrics to determine impact.

**Table 2. Dean Acupuncture Utilization**

Program Year	Claims	Procedures	Total Paid
2020	351	506	\$64,734
2021	276	392	\$49,096

Network Health

Network Health members can receive up to 20 acupuncture treatments to help treat specific conditions like back pain, neck pain, chronic migraines, knee pain, osteoarthritis, chemo-induced nausea, post-op nausea, and vomiting. 11 members used the benefit in 2021, totaling 136 claims. 20 members used the benefit in 2022, totaling 165 claims. Network would like to discontinue the pilot in 2024 due to challenges with provider contracting.

Navitus/WebMD

*It's Your Health: Diabetes* started in 2019. Non-HDHP subscribers and spouses who complete at least one diabetes management coaching call with WebMD receive a

reduced pharmacy copayment for several anti-diabetic prescription drugs through Navitus. Members in the *It's Your Health: Diabetes* program pay nothing for Level One drugs and pay the lesser of \$10 or 20% for Level Two drugs.

**Table 3. Prescription Drug Utilization, Spending, and Cost Sharing Change**

	<b>Utilizing Members</b>	<b>Prescriptions Filled</b>	<b>Member Savings</b>
<b>2019</b>	399	2,402	\$83,239
<b>2020</b>	542	6,704	\$92,705
<b>2021</b>	954	7,193	\$228,688
<b>2022</b>	1,297	10,833	\$768,308
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,192*</b>	<b>27,124</b>	<b>\$1,172,940</b>

\* This number is the total utilizing members, not unique members. For example, if a member filled a prescription through the program in 2021 and 2022, they would be counted twice, once in 2021 and once in 2022. Completion of at least one diabetes management coaching call is required to enroll in the pilot program for a subscriber to receive reduced copay benefits year over year.

According to Navitus, if all the Board's members who had prescriptions for diabetic medication during 2022 participated in the *It's Your Health: Diabetes* program, the collective membership would have saved \$1,890,691.

Merative compared *It's Your Health: Diabetes* participants to a matched cohort of eligible non-participants. There is some evidence that participants had better healthcare engagement from 2019 to 2021 (e.g., higher rate of preventive visits, improved adherence to medications, and reductions in unplanned emergency room visits and hospital admissions). There is a higher trend in participant medical costs that may be a result of higher use of preventive services compared to the control group. 87.2% of participants maintained or improved their disease stage compared to 80.4% of non-participants. See Attachment A. Strong conclusions cannot be made due to the relatively small sample sizes.

ETF recommends continuing this as a pilot program based on the positive trends indicated by the preliminary analysis of the limited data. Merative indicates a need for approximately 1,000 participants to have statistically significant evaluation results. The Board can consider an analysis of a 2021 or 2022 study group to get more statistically significant results after three to five years pass.

#### WebMD

*meQuilibrium (meQ)*, a stress management and resilience-building program, began as a pilot in late 2021. It is available to GHIP subscribers employed by one of eight select state agencies. As of March 31, 2023, participation has reached 718, an increase from 310 that was last reported to the Board ([Ref. GIB | 05.18.22 | 8B](#)). Participants completing the *meQ* reassessment report improvements in their stress management, emotion control, and work-life balance. They also report significant reductions in their anxiety, depression, and burnout risk. See Attachment B for a *meQ* participation and

impact report. Based on the positive results to date, and across its book of business, WebMD is offering *meQ* to all eligible Well Wisconsin participants as part of the Mental Health Request for Proposal. Pending successful contract negotiations, *meQ* will move out of the pilot phase for 2024 and into the base level of services available via Well Wisconsin.

### **New Pilot Programs**

Quartz and Security Health Plan submitted a total of seven pilot program proposals for 2024 implementation.

#### Quartz's 2024 Proposed Pilot Programs

*Obesity and Type 2 Diabetes Reversal Treatment, powered by Virta Health (Virta).* Virta is an in-network medical provider that offers a suite of metabolic health services focused on the treatment of obesity, prediabetes, and type 2 diabetes using an advanced telehealth platform to engage the member in daily interactions, learning, and monitoring. Virta's credentialed providers reference ketogenic diet therapy for their obesity, prediabetes, and diabetes "reversal" interventions with close monitoring of weight, blood ketones, and blood glucose (sugar) to promote clinically significant weight loss and reductions in hemoglobin A1c (3-month average of blood sugar values). The diabetes "reversal" programming also supports medication management with the goal of reducing diabetes-related prescriptions in partnership with the member's primary care doctor or diabetes team.

Participants can receive monitoring devices and associated strips as part of the program. The program would be considered a pilot since the monitoring devices and strips are a deviation from UB. ETF recommends moving forward with this pilot program.

*Pharmacist Diabetes Care Management Program.* Ambulatory care pharmacists with Quartz health system will provide diabetes care management services to optimize control of A1C and close gaps in evidence-based therapy for Quartz diabetes patients with elevated A1C. This program will focus on patients not being managed by Virta in the *Obesity and Type 2 Diabetes Reversal Treatment program* and will be an option for diabetes patients with elevated A1C who are not ready for intensive dietary management. Pharmacists will see patients virtually or in person and focus on testing and medication regimens, including adherence. All medication changes will be done in collaboration with the member's prescriber.

This is not considered a deviation from UB. It is considered a population health management program and can be offered to non-Medicare members. Medicare members receive support via Navitus already. This is not a pilot program.

*Food as Medicine.* The Quartz *Food as Medicine* program offers members medically tailored, home-delivered meals at no cost if they have an eligible chronic condition and are enrolled in a qualifying Quartz care management program. The medically tailored meals account for a member's nutrition-related acute or chronic conditions including

diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, chronic kidney disease, and any other pertinent conditions, allergies, or intolerances to food. Medically tailored meals are the product of medical nutrition therapy (MNT) provided by a registered dietitian (RDN). If members meet criteria, they are offered the benefit package that includes two daily medically tailored, home-delivered meals for six weeks (84 meals). Following the meal benefit, members would be offered a monthly medically tailored, home-delivered fresh food box with produce and lean proteins for the subsequent six months.

Food is a taxable benefit per the IRS publication 502, unless given in an inpatient or long-term care setting. Per Board policy, health plans cannot offer taxable benefits ([Ref. GIB | 05.13.20 | 5A](#)). ETF does not recommend offering this program to members.

*AbleTo Coaching+ and Therapy360.* *AbleTo Coaching+ and Therapy360* is a two-part program. *Coaching+* is a digital health solution offering behavioral health services to improve members' mental resilience. *Coaching+* is a service in which the member is matched with a coach (not a licensed behavioral health provider) to provide telephone and/or video visits weekly for about eight weeks. This is aimed at supporting the member in developing a self-management plan to address common mental wellness challenges and mild behavioral health symptoms that do not require formal behavioral health treatment with a licensed provider. Services leverage coping skills training and are available to all members. *Coaching+* does not offer medical benefits. It is considered a population health management program and not a pilot.

*Therapy360* is a more comprehensive service add-on benefit to the *AbleTo* product that offers care management, care coordination, weekly coaching visits, and weekly therapy visits with a licensed therapist. This program is geared towards members with high utilization/spending who are struggling with medical and psychiatric comorbidities that render them vulnerable and high risk. *AbleTo* conducts proactive outreach to engage members who are the best fit for this program and Quartz care teams will make referrals based on member needs. *Therapy360* includes bundled and coordinated services. *Therapy360* includes visits with a licensed professional at no cost. Since this is a deviation from UB, it would be considered a pilot program. ETF recommends implementing *Therapy360* as a pilot.

*Doula Services.* Quartz is contracting with community doula agencies to offer their prenatal and postpartum services to pregnant members who have had a preterm delivery or have been identified as having a high-risk pregnancy to influence healthy maternal behavior and improve perinatal health outcomes. The doula will engage in three prenatal visits with the participants. They will provide a holistic assessment, trauma-informed counseling, and tailored evidence-based education. The doula will be on call 24/7 starting at 38 weeks gestation to support participants through labor and delivery. They will also support the participant with up to three postpartum care visits within the first three months postpartum.

Doula services are not included in UB and would be considered a pilot. ETF recommends implementing this pilot.

### Security Health Plan

*Omada.* Omada is a digital diabetic program that connects members with health coaches and certified diabetes care and education specialists. It includes continuous glucose monitors (CGMs), blood glucose meters, and wireless scales. This is considered a pilot program since it deviates from UB with the inclusion of no-cost CGMs, meters, and scales for the member. ETF recommends implementing this pilot.

*Freesspira.* Freesspira is a digital program proven to significantly reduce or eliminate symptoms of panic disorder, panic attacks, and post-traumatic stress disorder. It includes a combination of digital tools and personalized training and coaching support. ETF staff do not consider this a pilot program because it does not deviate from UB. It is a training and education program, which can be categorized as a population health management program.

### **Next Steps**

ETF will work with the third-party administrators to finalize implementation plans for the new Board approved pilot programs and continue monitoring existing pilot programs.

Staff will be available at the Board meeting to answer questions.

Attachment A: [Merative's Assessment of WI ETF VBID Program: 2019–2021 Update](#)

Attachment B: [meQuilibrium Report](#)