

Guide to Reviewing Essential Health Benefits Benchmark Plans

Essential health benefits (EHB)-benchmark plans are based on 2012 plan designs, and therefore do not necessarily reflect requirements effective for plan years beginning on or after January 1, 2014. Therefore, when designing plans that are substantially equal to the EHB-benchmark plan beginning January 1, 2014, issuers may need to design plan benefits, including coverage and limitations, to comply with these requirements and limitations, including but not limited to, the following:

Annual and Lifetime Dollar Limits

The EHB-benchmark plans displayed may include annual and/or lifetime dollar limits; however, in accordance with 45 CFR 147.126, these limits cannot be applied to the essential health benefits. Annual and lifetime dollar limits can be converted to actuarially equivalent treatment or service limits.

Excluded Benefits

Pursuant to 45 CFR 156.115, the following benefits are excluded from EHB even though an EHB-benchmark plan may cover them: routine non-pediatric dental services, routine non-pediatric eye exam services, long-term/custodial nursing home care benefits, and/or non-medically necessary orthodontia. Please also note that although the EHB-benchmark plan may cover abortion services, pursuant to section 1303(b)(1)(A) of the Affordable Care Act, a QHP issuer is not required to cover these services. Section 156.115(c) provides that no health plan is required to cover abortion services as part of the requirement to cover EHB. Nothing in this provision impedes an issuer's ability to choose to cover abortion services or limits a state's ability to either prohibit or require these services under state law.

Habilitative Services

If the EHB-benchmark plan does not cover any habilitative services and the state does not define those benefits, then pursuant to 45 CFR 156.115(a)(5), the issuer determines which habilitative services to offer as a part of a two year transitional policy.

Coverage Limits

Pursuant to 45 CFR 156.115(a)(2), with the exception of coverage for pediatric services, a plan may not exclude an enrollee from coverage in an entire EHB category, regardless of whether such limits exist in the EHB-benchmark plan. For example, a plan may not exclude dependent children from the category of maternity and newborn coverage.

State-Required Benefits

For purposes of determining EHB, we consider state-required benefits (or mandates) to include only requirements that a health plan cover specific care, treatment, or services. We do not consider provider mandates, which require a health plan to reimburse specific health care professionals who render a covered service within their scope of practice, to be state-required benefits for purposes of EHB coverage. Similarly, we do not consider state-required benefits to include dependent mandates, which require a health plan to define dependents in a specific manner or to cover dependents under certain circumstances (e.g., newborn coverage, adopted children, domestic partners, and disabled children). Finally, we do not consider state anti-discrimination requirements relating to service delivery method (e.g., telemedicine) as state-required benefits.

Mental Health Parity

The EHB-benchmark plans displayed may not comply with the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAEA). However, as described in 45 CFR 156.115(a)(3), EHB plans must comply with the standards implemented under MHPAEA.

EHB-Benchmark Plan Prescription Drugs by Category and Class

Please note that in some cases a category is listed without a United States Pharmacopeia (USP) class because there are some drugs within the category that have not been assigned to a specific class.

Please also note that where the EHB-benchmark plan does not include coverage in a USP category and/or class, pursuant to 45 CFR 156.122, one drug would have to be offered in that USP category and/or class.

In conjunction with the policy that plans must offer the greater of one drug in every USP category and class or the number of drugs in each USP category and class offered by the EHB-benchmark, HHS is considering developing a drug counting service to assist states and issuers with implementation of the proposed prescription drug policy, as described in the following methodology document:

- [EHB Rx Crosswalk Methodology \(PDF - 52 KB\)](#)

Preventive Services

The EHB-benchmark plans displayed may not offer the preventive services described in 45 CFR 147.130. However, as described in 45 CFR 156.115(a)(4), EHB plans must comply with that section.