

Vermont Commercial ACO Pilot  
Compilation of Pilot Standards  
Reflecting Technical and Substantive Changes Approved by the GMCB on  
September 4, 2014

This document contains ACO commercial pilot standards originally reviewed and approved by the Green Mountain Care Board and the Vermont Health Care Improvement Project Steering Committee and Core Team during meetings that took place in October and November 2013.

ACO pilot standards are organized in the following four categories:

- Standards related to the ACO's structure:
  - [Financial Stability](#)
  - [Risk Mitigation](#)
  - [Patient Freedom of Choice](#)
  - [ACO Governance](#)
  
- Standards related to the ACO's payment methodology:
  - [Patient Attribution Methodology](#)
  - [Calculation of ACO Financial Performance and Distribution of Shared Risk Payments](#)
  
- Standards related to management of the ACO:
  - [Care Management](#)
  - [Payment Alignment](#)
  - [Data Use Standards](#)
  
- Process for review and modification of measures.

The objectives and details of each draft standard follow.

## **I. Financial Stability**

Objective: Protect ACOs from the assumption of "insurance risk" (the risk of whether a patient will develop an expensive health condition) when contracting with private and public payers so that the ACO can focus on management of "performance risk" (the risk of higher costs from delivering unnecessary services, delivering services inefficiently, or committing errors in diagnosis or treatment of a particular condition).

**A. Standards related to the effects of provider coding patterns on medical spending and risk scores**

1. The GMCB's Analytics Contractor will assess whether changes in provider coding patterns have had a substantive impact on medical spending, and if so, bring such funding and documentation to the GMCB for consideration with participating pilot ACOs.
2. The Payers and ACOs shall participate in a GMCB-facilitated process to review and consider the financial impact of any identified changes in ACO provider coding patterns.

**B. Standards related to downside risk limitation**

1. The Board has established that for the purposes of the pilot program, the ACO will assume the following downside risk in each pilot program year:
  - Year 1: no downside risk
  - Year 2: no downside risk
  - Year 3: downside risk not less than 3% and up to 5%
2. ACOs are required to submit a Risk Mitigation Plan to the state that demonstrates that the ACO has the ability to assume not less than 3% and up to 5% downside risk in Year 3 and receive state approval. Such a plan may, but need not, include the following elements: recoupment from payments to participating providers, stop loss protection, reinsurance, a provider payment withhold provision, and reserves (e.g., irrevocable letter of credit, escrow account, surety bond).
3. The Risk Mitigation Plan must include a downside risk distribution model that does not disproportionately punish any particular organization within the ACO and maintains network adequacy in the event of a contract year in which the ACO has experienced poor financial performance.

**C. Standards related to financial oversight.**

The payer will furnish financial reports regarding each ACO's risk performance for each six-month performance period to the GMCB, DVHA, and the VHCIP Payment Models Work Group or its successor in accordance with report formats and timelines defined by the GMCB, through a collaborative process with ACOs and payers.

**D. Minimum number of attributed lives for a contract with a payer for a given line of business.**

1. For Year 1 of the ACO pilot, an ACO participating with one commercial payer must have at least five thousand (5,000) commercial attributed lives as of June 30, 2014. For Year 1 of the ACO pilot, an ACO participating with two commercial payers must have three thousand (3,000) commercial attributed lives for each of the two payers, for an aggregate minimum of six thousand (6,000) commercial attributed lives, as of June 30, 2014.

In order to establish the number of an ACO's commercial attributed lives, the payer will, on July 1, 2014, or as soon thereafter as possible, provide the ACO with an account of ACO's commercial attributed lives as of June 30, 2014. Based upon the number of an ACO's commercial attributed lives as of June 30, 2014, the ACO and payer may proceed as follows: if the commercial attributed lives are below the minimum number required for participation, the payer or the ACO may:

- a. terminate their agreement for cause as of June 30, 2014; or
  - b. agree to maintain their agreement in full force and effect.
2. In Performance Years 2 and 3, a participating insurer may elect to not participate with an ACO, if: (1) that ACO is participating with one commercial insurer and that ACO's projected or actual attributed member months with that insurer fall below 60,000 annually; or (2) that ACO is participating with two commercial insurers and that ACO's projected or annual attributed member months with that insurer fall below 36,000 annually.

If an ACO falls below the attribution threshold required for participation in the pilot in Years 2 and 3, it may request that the relevant payers participate in a GMCB-facilitated process to determine whether one or more of the payers would find it acceptable to waive the enrollment threshold and either a) establish a contract with the ACO in the absence of meeting this requirement, or b) permit an already-contracted ACO eligibility to share in any generated savings. While the GMCB will facilitate this process, the decision regarding whether to waive the enrollment threshold and contract with the ACO, or to permit a contracted ACO to share in any savings, remains with the payer.

**F. The ACO will notify the Board if the ACO is transferring risk to any participating provider organization within its network.**

## **II. Risk Mitigation**

The ACOs must provide the GMCB with a detailed plan to mitigate the impact of the maximum potential loss on the ACO and its provider network in Year 3 of the commercial ACO pilot. Such a plan must establish a method for repaying losses to the insurers participating in the pilot. The method may include recoupment from payments to its participating providers, stop loss reinsurance, surety bonds, escrow accounts, a line of credit, or some other payment mechanism such as a withhold of a portion of any previous shared savings achieved. The ACO must provide documentation of its ability to repay such losses 90 days prior to the start of Year 3.

Any requirements for risk mitigation, as noted above, will be the responsibility of the ACO itself, and not of the participating providers. The burden of holding participating providers financially accountable shall rest with the ACO, and the ACO must to exhibit their ability to manage the risk as noted above.

## **III. Patient Freedom of Choice**

1. ACO patients will have freedom of choice with regard to their providers consistent with their health plan benefit.

## **IV. ACO Governance**

1. The ACO must maintain an identifiable governing body that has responsibility for oversight and strategic direction of the ACO, and holding ACO management accountable for the ACO's activities.
2. The organization must identify its board members, define their roles and describe the responsibilities of the board.
3. The governing body must have a transparent governing process which includes the following:
  - a. publishing the names and contact information for the governing body members;
  - b. devoting an allotted time at the beginning of each in-person governing body meeting to hear comments from members of the public who have signed up prior to the meeting and providing public updates of ACO activities;
  - c. making meeting minutes available to the ACO's provider network upon request, and
  - d. posting summaries of ACO activities provided to the ACO's consumer advisory board on the ACO's website.

4. The governing body members must have a fiduciary duty to the ACO and act consistently with that duty.
5. At least 75 percent control of the ACO's governing body must be held by or represent ACO participants or provide for meaningful involvement of ACO participants on the governing body. For the purpose of determining if this requirement is met, a "participant" shall mean an organization that:
  - a. has, through a formal, written document, agreed to collaborate on one or more ACO programs designed to improve quality, patient experience, and manage costs, and
  - b. is eligible to receive shared savings distributions based on the distribution rules of the ACO or participate in alternative financial incentive programs as agreed to by the ACO and its participants.

A "participant" does not need to have lives attributed to the ACO to be considered a participant. An organization may have lives attributed to one ACO but still participate in another ACO as per meeting conditions 5a and 5b above. So long as conditions 5a and 5b above are met, that organization will be considered a "participant" if seated on a governing body.

6. The ACO's governing body must at a minimum also include at least one consumer member who is a Medicare beneficiary (if the ACO participates with Medicare), at least one consumer member who is a Medicaid beneficiary (if the ACO participates with Medicaid), and at least one consumer member who is a member of a commercial insurance plan (if the ACO participates with one or more commercial insurers). Regardless of the number of payers with which the ACO participates, there must be at least two consumer members on the ACO governing body. These consumer members should have some personal, volunteer, or professional experience in advocating for consumers on health care issues. They should also be representative of the diversity of consumers served by the organization, taking into account demographic and non-demographic factors including, but not limited to, gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geographic region, medical diagnoses, and services used. The ACO's governing board shall consult with advocacy groups and organizational staff in the recruitment process.

The ACO shall not be found to be in non-conformance if the GMCB determines that the ACO has with full intent and goodwill recruited the participation of qualified consumer representatives to its governing body on an ongoing basis and has not been successful.

7. The ACO must have a regularly scheduled process for inviting and considering consumer input regarding ACO policy, including the establishment of a consumer advisory board, with membership drawn from the community served by the ACO, including patients, their families, and caregivers. The consumer advisory board must meet at least quarterly. Members of ACO management and the governing body must regularly attend consumer advisory board meetings and report back to the ACO governing body following each meeting of the consumer advisory board. The results of other consumer input activities shall be reported to the ACO's governing body at least annually.

## **V. Patient Attribution Methodology**

Patients will be attributed to an ACO as follows:

1. The look back period is the most recent 24 months for which claims are available.
2. Identify all members who meet the following criteria as of the last day in the look back period:
  - Employer situated in Vermont or member/beneficiary residing in Vermont for commercial insurers (payers can select one of these options);
  - The insurer is the primary payer.
3. For products that require members to select a primary care provider, and for which the member has selected a primary care provider, attribute those members to that provider.
4. For other members, select all claims identified in step 2 with the following qualifying CPT Codes<sup>1</sup> in the look back period (most recent 24 months) for primary care providers where the provider specialty is internal medicine, general medicine, geriatric medicine, family medicine, pediatrics, naturopathic medicine; or is a nurse practitioner, or physician assistant; or where the provider is an FQHC or Rural Health Clinic.

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<sup>1</sup> Should the Blueprint for Health change the qualifying CPT codes to be other than those listed in this table, the VHCIP Payment Models Work Group shall consider the adoption of such changes.

CPT-4 Code Description Summary
<b>Evaluation and Management - Office or Other Outpatient Services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Patient: 99201-99205</li> <li>• Established Patient: 99211-99215</li> </ul>
<b>Consultations - Office or Other Outpatient Consultations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New or Established Patient: 99241-99245</li> </ul>
<b>Nursing Facility Services:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E &amp; M New/Established patient: 99304-99306</li> <li>• Subsequent Nursing Facility Care: 99307-99310</li> </ul>
<b>Domiciliary, Rest Home (e.g., Boarding Home), or Custodial Care Service:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domiciliary or Rest Home Visit New Patient: 99324-99328</li> <li>• Domiciliary or Rest Home Visit Established Patient: 99334-99337</li> </ul>
<b>Home Services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Patient: 99341-99345</li> <li>• Established Patient: 99347-99350</li> </ul>
<b>Prolonged Services - Prolonged Physician Service With Direct (Face-to-Face) Patient Contact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 99354 and 99355</li> </ul>
<b>Prolonged Services - Prolonged Physician Service Without Direct (Face-to-Face) Patient Contact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 99358 and 99359</li> </ul>
<b>Preventive Medicine Services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Patient: 99381-99387</li> <li>• Established Patient: 99391-99397</li> </ul>
<b>Counseling Risk Factor Reduction and Behavior Change Intervention</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New or Established Patient Preventive Medicine, Individual Counseling: 99401-99404</li> <li>• New or Established Patient Behavior Change Interventions, Individual: 99406-99409</li> <li>• New or Established Patient Preventive Medicine, Group Counseling: 99411-99412</li> </ul>
<b>Other Preventive Medicine Services - Administration and interpretation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 99420</li> </ul>
<b>Other Preventive Medicine Services - Unlisted preventive:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 99429</li> </ul>
<b>Newborn Care Services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial and subsequent care for evaluation and management of normal newborn infant: 99460-99463</li> </ul>

CPT-4 Code Description Summary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance at delivery (when requested by the delivering physician) and initial stabilization of newborn: 99464</li> <li>• Delivery/birthing room resuscitation: 99465</li> </ul>
<p><b>Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) - Global Visit</b>  <i>( billed as a revenue code on an institutional claim form)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0521 = Clinic visit by member to RHC/FQHC;</li> <li>• 0522 = Home visit by RHC/FQHC practitioner</li> <li>• 0525 = Nursing home visit by RHC/FQHC practitioner</li> </ul>

5. Assign a member to the practice where s/he had the greatest number of qualifying claims. A practice shall be identified by the NPIs of the individual providers associated with it.
6. If a member has an equal number of qualifying visits to more than one practice, assign the member/beneficiary to the one with the most recent visit.
7. Insurers can choose to apply elements in addition to 5 and 6 above when conducting their attribution. However, at a minimum use the greatest number of claims (5 above), followed by the most recent claim if there is a tie (6 above).
8. Insurers will run their attributions at least monthly.
9. Using a GMCB-facilitated process, the participating ACOs, payers, and the VHCIP Payment Models Work Group or its successor will reconsider during Year 1 whether obstetricians and gynecologists and/or women's health care providers should be added to the attributing clinician list. (Consideration should also be given to other provider types who might play a primary role in managing a patient's health care during different stages of their life span.)
10. A qualified primary care practitioner to whom lives have been attributed by a payer may only participate as a primary care practitioner in one ACO. If a qualified primary care practitioner works under multiple tax ID numbers, the practitioner may not use a specific tax ID number with more than one ACO.



## VI. Calculation of ACO Financial Performance and Distribution of Shared Risk Payments

*(See attached spreadsheet.)*

### I. Actions Initiated Before the Performance Year Begins

**Step 1: Determine the expected PMPM medical expense spending for the ACO's total patient population absent any actions taken by the ACO.**

Years 1 and 2: The medical expense portion of the GMCB-approved Exchange premium for each Exchange-offered product, adjusted from allowed to paid amounts, adjusted for excluded services (see below), high-cost outliers<sup>2</sup>, and risk-adjusted for the ACO-attributed population, and then calculated as a weighted average PMPM amount across all commercial products with weighting based on ACO attribution by product, shall represent the expected PMPM medical expense spending ("expected spending") for Years 1 and 2.

The ACO-responsible services used to define expected spending shall include all covered services except for:

1. services that are carved out of the contract by self-insured employer customers
  - prescription (retail) medications (excluded in the context of shared savings in Years 1 and 2, with potential inclusion in the context of shared (upside and downside) risk in Year 3 following VHCIP Payment Models Work Group discussion, and
2. dental benefits<sup>3</sup>.

Year 3: The Year 3 expected spending shall be calculated using an alternative methodology to be developed through the Payment Models Work Group and recommended to the GMCB Board for approval. The employed trend rate will be made available to the insurers prior to the deadline for GMCB rate submission in order to facilitate the calculation of premium rates for the Exchange. It is the shared intent of the pilot participants and the GMCB that the methodology shall not reduce expected spending based on any savings achieved by the pilot ACO(s) in the first two years.

The GMCB will also calculate the expected spending for the ACO population on an insurer-by-insurer basis. This is called the "insurer-specific expected spending."

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<sup>2</sup> The calculation shall exclude the projected value of Allowed claims per claimant in excess of \$125,000 per performance year.

<sup>3</sup> The exclusion of dental services will be re-evaluated after the Exchange becomes operational and pediatric dental services become a mandated benefit.

At the request of a pilot ACO or insurer and informed by the advice of the GMCB's actuary and participating ACOs and insurers, the GMCB will reconsider and adjust expected spending if unanticipated events, or macro-economic or environmental events, occur that would reasonably be expected to significantly impact medical expenses or payer assumptions during the Exchange premium development process that were incorrect and resulted in significantly different spending than expected.

**Step 2: Determine the targeted PMPM medical expense spending for the ACO's patient population based on expected cost growth limiting actions to be taken by the ACO.**

Targeted spending is the PMPM spending that approximates a reduction in PMPM spending that would not have otherwise occurred absent actions taken by the ACO. Targeted spending is calculated by multiplying PMPM spending by the **target rate**. The target rate(s) for Years 1 and 2 for the aggregate Exchange market shall be the expected rate minus the CMS Minimum Savings Rate for a Medicare ACO for the specific performance year, with consideration of the size of the ACO's Exchange population. The GMCB will approve the target rate.

As noted above, the Year 3 targeted spending shall be calculated using an alternative methodology to be developed by the VHCIP Payment Models Work Group and approved by the GMCB.

The GMCB will also calculate the targeted spending for the ACO population on an insurer-by-insurer basis in the same fashion, as described within the attached worksheet. The resulting amount for each insurer is called the "insurer-specific targeted spending."

Actions Initiated After the Performance Year Ends

**Step 3: Determine actual spending and whether the ACO has generated savings.**

No later than eight months (i.e., two months following the six-month claim lag period) following the end of each pilot year, the GMCB or its designee shall calculate the actual medical expense spending ("actual spending") by Exchange metal category for each ACO's attributed population using commonly defined insurer data provided to the GMCB or its designee. Medical spending shall be defined to include all paid claims for ACO-responsible services as defined above.

PMPM medical expense spending shall then be adjusted as follows:

- clinical case mix using the risk adjustment model utilized by Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight (CCIIO) for the federal exchange. The GMCB may consider alternatives for future years;
- truncation of claims for high-cost patient outliers whose annual claims value exceed \$125,000, and

- conversion from allowed to paid claims value.

For Years 1 and 2, insurers will assume all financial responsibility for the value of claims that exceed the high-cost outlier threshold. The GMCB and participating pilot insurers and ACOs will reassess this practice during Years 1 and 2 for Year 3.

The GMCB or its designee shall aggregate the adjusted spending data across insurers to get the ACO's "actual spending." The actual spending for each ACO shall be compared to its expected spending.

- If the ACO's actual aggregate spending is greater than the expected spending, then the ACO will be ineligible to receive shared savings payments from any insurer.
- If the ACO's actual aggregate spending is less than the expected spending, then it will be said to have "generated savings" and the ACO will be eligible to receive shared savings payments from one or more of the pilot participant insurers.
- If the ACO's actual aggregate spending is less than the expected spending, then the ACO will not be responsible for covering any of the excess spending for any insurer.

Once the GMCB determines that the ACO has generated aggregate savings across insurers, the GMCB will also calculate the actual spending for the ACO population on an insurer-by-insurer basis. This is called the "insurer-specific actual spending." The GMCB shall use this insurer-specific actual spending amount to assess savings at the individual insurer level.

Once the insurer-specific savings have been calculated, an ACO's share of savings will be determined in two phases. This step defines the ACO's eligible share of savings based on the degree to which actual PMPM spending falls below expected PMPM spending. The share of savings earned by the ACO based on the methodology above will be subject to qualification and modification by the application of quality performance scores as defined in Step 4.

In Years 1 and 2 of the pilot:

- If the insurer-specific actual spending for the ACO population is between the insurer-specific expected spending and the insurer-specific targeted spending, the ACO will share 25% of the insurer-specific savings.
- If the insurer-specific actual spending is below the insurer-specific targeted spending, the ACO will share 60% of the insurer-specific savings. (The cumulative insurer-specific savings would therefore be calculated as 60% of the difference between actual spending and targeted spending plus 25% of the difference between expected spending and targeted spending.)
- An insurer's savings distribution to the ACO will be capped at 10% of the ACO's insurer-specific expected spending and not greater than insurer premium approved by the Green Mountain Care Board.

In Year 3 of the pilot:

The formula for distribution of insurer-specific savings will be the same as in Years 1 and 2, except that the ACO will be responsible for a percentage of the insurer-specific excess spending up to a cap equal to an amount no less than 3% and up to 5% of the ACO's insurer-specific expected spending.

All participating ACOs shall assume the same level of downside risk in Year 3, as approved by the VHCIP Payment Models Work Group and the GMCB.

The calculation of the ACO's liability will be as follows:

- If the ACO's total actual spending is greater than the total expected spending (called "excess spending"), then the ACO will assume responsibility for insurer-specific actual medical expense spending that exceeds the insurer-specific expected spending in a way that is reciprocal to the approach to distribution of savings.
- If the insurer-specific excess spending is less than the amount equivalent to the difference between expected spending and targeted spending, then the ACO will be responsible for 25% of the insurer-specific excess spending.
- If the ACO's excess spending exceeds the amount equivalent to the difference between expected spending and targeted spending, then the ACO will be responsible for 60% of the insurer-specific excess spending over the difference, up to a cap equal to an amount no greater than 5% of the ACO's insurer-specific expected spending.

If the sum of ACO savings at the insurer-specific level is greater than that generated in aggregate, the insurer-specific ACO savings will be reduced to the aggregate savings amount. If reductions need to occur for more than one insurer, the reductions shall be proportionately reduced from each insurer's shared savings with the ACO for the performance period. Any reductions shall be based on the percentage of savings that an insurer would have to pay before the aggregate savings cap.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Step 4: Assess ACO quality performance to inform savings distribution.**

The second phase of determining an ACO's savings distribution involves assessing quality performance. The distribution of eligible savings will be contingent on demonstration that the ACO's quality meets a minimum qualifying threshold or "gate." Should the ACO's quality performance pass through the gate, the size of the distribution will vary and be linked to the ACO's performance on specific quality measures. Higher quality performance will yield a larger share of savings up to the maximum distribution as described above.

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<sup>4</sup> A reciprocal approach shall apply to ACO excess spending in Year 3, such that excess spending calculated at the issuer-specific level shall not exceed that calculated at the aggregate level.

**Methodology for distribution of shared savings:** For year one of the commercial pilot, compare the ACO's performance on the payment measures (see Table 1 below) to the PPO HEDIS national percentile benchmark<sup>5</sup> and assign 1, 2 or 3 points based on whether the ACO is at the national 25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> or 75<sup>th</sup> percentile for the measure.

**Table 1. Core Measures for Payment in Year One of the Commercial Pilot**

#	Measure	Data Source	2012 HEDIS Benchmark (PPO)
Core-1	Plan All-Cause Readmissions NQF #1768, NCQA	Claims	Nat. 90 <sup>th</sup> : .68 Nat. 75 <sup>th</sup> : .73 Nat. 50 <sup>th</sup> : .78 Nat. 25 <sup>th</sup> : .83  *Please note, in interpreting this measure, a lower rate is better.
Core-2	Adolescent Well-Care Visits HEDIS AWC	Claims	Nat. 90 <sup>th</sup> : 58.5 Nat. 75 <sup>th</sup> : 46.32 Nat. 50 <sup>th</sup> : 38.66 Nat. 25 <sup>th</sup> : 32.14
Core-3	Cholesterol Management for Patients with Cardiovascular Conditions (LDL-C Screening Only for Year 1)	Claims	Nat. 90 <sup>th</sup> : 89.74 Nat. 75 <sup>th</sup> : 87.94 Nat. 50 <sup>th</sup> : 84.67 Nat. 25 <sup>th</sup> : 81.27
Core-4	Follow-Up After Hospitalization for Mental Illness: 7-day NQF #0576, NCQA HEDIS FUH	Claims	Nat. 90 <sup>th</sup> : 67.23 Nat. 75 <sup>th</sup> : 60.00 Nat. 50 <sup>th</sup> : 53.09 Nat. 25 <sup>th</sup> : 45.70
Core-5	Initiation and Engagement for Substance Abuse Treatment: Initiation and Engagement of AOD Treatment (composite) NQF #0004, NCQA HEDIS IET CMMI	Claims	Nat. 90 <sup>th</sup> : 35.28 Nat. 75 <sup>th</sup> : 31.94 Nat. 50 <sup>th</sup> : 27.23 Nat. 25 <sup>th</sup> : 24.09

<sup>5</sup> NCQA has traditionally offered several HEDIS commercial product benchmarks, e.g., HMO, POS, HMO/POS, HMO/PPO combined, etc.

Core-6	Avoidance of Antibiotic Treatment for Adults With Acute Bronchitis NQF #0058, NCQA HEDIS AAB	Claims	Nat. 90 <sup>th</sup> : 28.13 Nat. 75 <sup>th</sup> : 24.30 Nat. 50 <sup>th</sup> : 20.72 Nat. 25 <sup>th</sup> : 17.98
Core-7	Chlamydia Screening in Women NQF #0033, NCQA HEDIS CHL	Claims	Nat. 90 <sup>th</sup> : 54.94 Nat. 75 <sup>th</sup> : 47.30 Nat. 50 <sup>th</sup> : 40.87 Nat. 25 <sup>th</sup> : 36.79

**The Gate:** In order to retain savings for which the ACO is eligible in accordance with Steps 1-3 above, the ACO must earn meet a minimum threshold for performance on a defined set of common measures to be used by all pilot-participating commercial insurers and ACOs. For the commercial pilot, the ACO must earn 55% of the eligible points in order to receive savings. If the ACO is not able to meet the overall quality gate, then it will not be eligible for any shared savings. If the ACO meets the overall quality gate, it may retain at least 75% of the savings for which it is eligible (see Table 2).

**The Ladder:** In order to retain a greater portion of the savings for which the ACO is eligible, the ACO must achieve higher performance levels for the measures. There shall be six steps on the ladder, which reflect increased levels of performance (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Distribution of Shared Savings in Year One of Commercial Pilot**

% of eligible points	% of earned savings
55%	75%
60%	80%
65%	85%
70%	90%
75%	95%
80%	100%

**Eligibility for shared savings based on performance improvement.**

Should the ACO, in Years 2 or 3, fail to meet the minimum quality score, it may still be eligible to receive shared savings if the GMCB determines, after providing notice to and accepting written input from the insurer and ACO (and input from ACO participants, if offered), that the ACO has made meaningful improvement in its quality performance as measured against prior pilot years. The GMCB will make this determination after conducting a public process that offers stakeholders and other interested persons sufficient time to offer verbal and/or written comments related to the issues before the GMCB.

#### **Step 5: Distribute shared savings payments**

The GMCB or its designee will calculate an interim assessment of performance year medical expense relative to expected and targeted medical spending for each ACO/insurer dyad within four months of the end of the performance year and inform the insurers and ACOs of the results, providing supporting documentation when doing so. If the savings generated exceed the insurer-specific targeted spending, and the preliminary assessment of the ACO's performance on the required measures is sufficiently strong, then within two weeks of the notification, the insurers will offer the ACO the opportunity to receive an interim payment, not to exceed 75% of the total payment for which the ACO is eligible.

The GMCB or its designee will complete the analysis of savings within two months of the conclusion of the six-month claim lag period and inform the insurers and ACOs of the results, providing supporting documentation when doing so. The insurers will then make any required savings distributions to contracted ACOs within two weeks of notification by the GMCB. Under no circumstances shall the amount of a shared savings payment distribution to an ACO jeopardize the insurer's ability to meet federal Medical Loss Ratio (MLR) requirements. The amount of the shared savings distribution shall be capped at the point that the MLR limit is reached.

### **VII. Care Management Standards (*under development*)**

**Objective:** Effective care management programs close to, if not at, the site of care for those patients at highest risk of future intensive resource utilization is considered by many to be the linchpin of sustained viability for providers entering population-based payment arrangements. Any standards will be developed by the VHCIP Care Models Work Group. For Year 1 of the pilot emphasis will be placed upon member communication and care transitions.

## VIII. Payment Alignment

**Objective:** Improve the likelihood that ACOs attain their cost and quality improvement goals by aligning payment incentives at the payer-ACO level to the individual clinician and facility level.

1. The performance incentives that are incorporated into the payment arrangements between a commercial insurer and an ACO should be appropriately reflected in those that the ACO utilizes with its contracted providers. ACOs will share with the GMCB their written plans for:
  - a. aligning provider payment (from insurers or Medicaid) and compensation (from ACO participant organization) with ACO performance incentives for cost and quality, and
  - b. distributing any earned shared savings.
2. ACOs utilizing a network model should be encouraged to create regional groupings (or “pods”) of providers under a shared savings model that would incent provider performance resulting from the delivery of services that are more directly under their control. The regional groupings or "pods" would have to be of sufficient size to reasonably calculate "earned" savings or losses. ACO provider groupings should be incentivized individually and collectively to support accountability for quality of care and cost management.
3. Insurers shall support ACOs by collaborating with ACOs to align performance incentives by considering the use of alternative payment methodology including bundled payments and other episode-based payment methodologies.

## IX. Vermont ACO Data Use Standards

ACOs and payers must submit the required data reports detailed in the “Data Use Report Standards for ACO Pilot” in the format defined.

## X. Process for Review and Modification of Measures Used in the Commercial and Medicaid ACO Pilot Program

1. The VHCIP Quality and Performance Measures Work Group will review all **Payment and Reporting measures** included in the Core Measure Set beginning in the second quarter of each pilot year, with input from the VHCIP Payment Models Work Group. For each measure, these reviews will consider payer and provider data availability, data quality, pilot experience reporting the measure, ACO performance, and any changes to national clinical guidelines. The goal of the review will be to determine whether each measure should continue to be used as-is for its designated purpose, or whether each



measure should be modified (e.g. advanced from Reporting status to Payment status in a subsequent pilot year) or dropped for the next pilot year. The VHCIP Quality and Performance Measures Work Group will make recommendations for changes to measures for the next program year if the changes have the support of a majority of the voting members of the Work Group. Such recommendations will include annual updates to the Payment and Reporting measures included in the Core Measure Set narrative measure specifications as necessary upon release of updates to national guidelines (e.g., annual updates made by the National Committee for Quality Assurance to HEDIS® specifications for that year's performance measures). Such recommendations will be finalized no later than July 31<sup>st</sup> of the year prior to implementation of the changes. Recommendations will go to the VHCIP Steering Committee, the VHCIP Core Team and the GMCB for review. Approval for any changes must be finalized no later than September 30<sup>th</sup> of the year prior to implementation of the changes. In the interest of retaining measures selected for Payment and Reporting purposes for the duration of the pilot program, measures should not be removed in subsequent years unless there are significant issues with data availability, data quality, pilot experience in reporting the measure, ACO performance, and/or changes to national clinical guidelines.

2. The VHCIP Quality and Performance Measures Work Group and the VHCIP Payment Models Work Group will review all **targets and benchmarks** for the measures designated for Payment purposes beginning in the second quarter of each pilot year. For each measure, these reviews will consider whether the benchmark employed as the performance target (e.g., national x<sup>th</sup> percentile) should remain constant or change for the next pilot year. The Work Group should consider setting targets in year two and three that increase incentives for quality improvement. The VHCIP Quality and Performance Measures Work Group will make recommendations for changes to benchmarks and targets for the next program year if the changes have the support of a majority of the voting members of the Work Group. Such recommendations will include annual updates to the targets and benchmarks for measures designated for Payment purposes as necessary upon release of updates to national guidelines (e.g., annual updates made by the National Committee for Quality Assurance to HEDIS® specifications for that year's performance measures). Such recommendations will be finalized no later than July 31<sup>st</sup> of the year prior to implementation of the changes. Recommendations will go to the VHCIP Steering Committee, the VHCIP Core Team and the GMCB for review. Approval for any changes must be finalized no later than September 30<sup>th</sup> of the year prior to implementation of the changes.
3. The VHCIP Quality and Performance Measures Work Group will review all **measures designated as Pending** in the Core Measure Set and consider any new measures for addition to the set beginning in the first quarter of each pilot year, with input from the VHCIP Payment Models Work Group. For each measure, these reviews will consider

data availability and quality, patient populations served, and measure specifications, with the goal of developing a plan for measure and/or data systems development and a timeline for implementation of each measure. If the VHCIP Quality and Performance Measures Work Group determines that a measure has the support of a majority of the voting members of the Work Group and is ready to be advanced from Pending status to Payment or Reporting status or added to the measure set in the next pilot year, the Work Group shall recommend the measure as either a Payment or Reporting measure and indicate whether the measure should replace an existing Payment or Reporting measure or be added to the set by July 31<sup>st</sup> of the year prior to implementation of the changes. Such recommendations will include annual updates to measures designated as Pending in the Core Measure Set narrative measure specifications as necessary upon release of updates to national guidelines (e.g., annual updates made by the National Committee for Quality Assurance to HEDIS® specifications for that year's performance measures). New measures should be carefully considered in light of the Work Group's measure selection criteria. If a recommended new measure relates to a Medicare Shared Savings Program (MSSP) measure, the Work Group shall recommend following the MSSP measure specifications as closely as possible. If the Work Group designates the measure for Payment, it shall recommend an appropriate target that includes consideration of any available state-level performance data and national and regional benchmarks. Recommendations will go to the VHCIP Steering Committee, the VHCIP Core Team and the GMCB for review. Approval for any changes must be finalized no later than September 30<sup>th</sup> of the year prior to implementation of the changes.

4. The VHCIP Quality and Performance Measures Work Group will review **state or insurer performance on the Monitoring and Evaluation measures** beginning in the second quarter of each year, with input from the VHCIP Payment Models Work Group. The measures will remain Monitoring and Evaluation measures unless a majority of the voting members of the Work Group determines that one or more measures presents an opportunity for improvement and meets measure selection criteria, at which point the VHCIP Quality and Performance Measures Work Group may recommend that the measure be moved to the Core Measure Set to be assessed at the ACO level and used for either Payment or Reporting. The VHCIP Quality and Performance Measures Work Group will make recommendations for changes to the Monitoring and Evaluation measures for the next program year if the changes have the support of a majority of the members of the Work Group. Such recommendations will include annual updates to the Monitoring and Evaluation measures included in the Monitoring and Evaluation Measure Set narrative measure specifications as necessary upon release of updates to national guidelines (e.g., annual updates made by the National Committee for Quality Assurance to HEDIS® specifications for that year's performance measures). Such recommendations will be finalized no later than July 31<sup>st</sup> of the year prior to implementation of the changes. Recommendations will go to the VHCIP Steering

Committee, the VHCIP Core Team and the GMCB for review. Approval for any changes must be finalized no later than September 30<sup>th</sup> of the year prior to implementation of the changes.

5. The GMCB will release the **final measure specifications for the next pilot year by no later than** October 31<sup>st</sup> of the year prior to the implementation of the changes. The specifications document will provide the details of any new measures and any changes from the previous year.
6. If during the course of the year, a national clinical guideline for any measure designated for Payment or Reporting changes or an ACO or payer participating in the pilot raises a serious concern about the implementation of a particular measure, the VHCIP Quality and Performance Measures Work Group will review the measure and recommend a course of action for consideration, with input from the VHCIP Payment Models Work Group. If the VHCIP Quality and Performance Measures Work Group determines that a change to a measure has the support of a majority of the voting members of the Work Group, recommendations will go to the VHCIP Steering Committee, the VHCIP Core Team and the GMCB for review. Upon approval of a recommended change to a measure for the current pilot year, the GMCB must notify all pilot participants of the proposed change within 14 days.