



Member Newsletter

Maryland HealthChoice Program

COVID-19 vaccination letter from our Chief Medical Officer.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause sickness and death. Over two dozen of your fellow MedStar Family Choice members have died since the outbreak. Even more friends and family members have also died. My deepest sympathy to the families who have suffered the impact of this pandemic. In the last few weeks, there has been an increase in members with COVID-19 and members who are in the hospital. And, we are seeing more members sick enough to be in the hospital.

Now is the time to put a stop to this for yourself, your family, your friends, and your community. We all need to do our part. **My message is a simple one - if you haven't gotten the shot yet - you need to get vaccinated.**

Here are the facts to know:

- **COVID-19 is a deadly infection.** For every 100 people who get infected, about 2 people will die.
- **The vaccines are tested.** Over 390 million Americans have received at least one dose.
- **The vaccines are safe compared to the risks from getting COVID-19.** Some complications have been reported but at very, very low rates.
- **There are a small number of break-through COVID-19 cases being reported in people who have already been vaccinated.** That's not a big surprise. No vaccine is 100% effective. But for those who have been vaccinated and who get COVID-19, the case is milder. They are not ending up in the hospital on a ventilator, and they are not dying in the hospital.
- **The Delta variant is real and very dangerous.** It is in the USA and in Maryland. It is more infectious. It can cause more serious disease. And, it can be spread by people who are vaccinated. We can stop it from changing and spreading by getting more people vaccinated.

Letter continued on the next page.

Para obtener una versión en español de este boletín, visite MedStarFamilyChoice.com o llame a Servicios para Miembros al **888-404-3549**.

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- **The vaccines available are effective against the Delta variant.** It is true that the vaccines are not as effective as they were to the original strain. That's no surprise to the scientists who study viruses. It's what they have been warning us about for months. That should not stop you from getting vaccinated. Being vaccinated will protect you from getting really sick and even dying.

Lastly, this is what is happening in our state today:

- **Hospital admissions are on the rise again here in Maryland.** There were 796 people in the hospital today (9/27/2021) with 192 people in the Intensive Care Unit. Hospitalizations for children age 5-11 who are not eligible for vaccination are rising faster than adults- tripled since July.
- **Across the country, 90% or more of the deaths have occurred in unvaccinated people. In Maryland, 100% of the people who died from COVID-19 in June had not gotten the vaccine.**

So please, review these facts. If you have been unsure about vaccination, I hope this convinces you to get vaccinated. I hope you share this with others who are also undecided. We all need to do our part to protect ourselves, our community and the children who are not yet able to receive vaccine.

Winter is just around the corner and that means **flu season is about to begin**. Last year was a very mild flu season because the social distancing and other measures taken helped prevent the spread of influenza. This year, those measures are being relaxed -we may be back to in person work, children are back in school, we are going to larger gatherings - all things that are likely to expose us to the flu this year. And, some scientists are predicting a "bad" flu season this year.

Everyone eligible - adults and children - should be vaccinated for BOTH flu and COVID **now** to protect them this winter. It is safe to get a flu shot and a COVID vaccination on the same day. Both are available at your practitioner's office and many pharmacies at no cost to you with your MedStar Family Choice membership.

If you have questions, please talk to your health care provider. If you want to get your vaccine, visit [Covidlink.Maryland.gov](https://covidlink.maryland.gov) to find a location near you.

Sincerely,

Patryce A. Toye, MD
Chief Medical Officer
MedStar Family Choice

Understand fraud, waste, and abuse.

While MedStar Family Choice looks for possible fraud, waste, and abuse activities, we need your help to stop fraud, waste, and abuse. MedStar Family Choice has a strict non-retaliation policy. You do not need to give your name. Please report any situation that may involve fraud, waste, and/or abuse immediately by calling MedStar Family Choice's Director of Medicaid Contract Oversight at **888-404-3549**, the MedStar Health Corporate Integrity Hotline at **877-811-3411**, or the HealthChoice Fraud hotline at **800-455-4521**.

You can also send something in writing to the Maryland Department of Health Program Integrity Unit at mdh.oig@maryland.gov or via mail at 201 West Preston St., Baltimore, MD 21201.

Flu shots are very important.

The typical flu season occurs from fall to early spring. Influenza (commonly known as the flu) is a potentially serious disease. It can sometimes lead to hospitalization or even death. A flu shot (vaccine) is the most effective way to reduce the risk of getting the flu.*

You need a flu shot every year because the flu virus changes and adapts. Flu vaccines (shots) are offered in most doctor's offices, urgent care clinics, health departments, pharmacies, and even in some schools via School-Based Health Centers. Protect yourself and your family by getting your flu shots early. MedStar Family Choice members can receive a flu shot at no cost!

To schedule your flu shot, please contact your primary care physician (PCP) or visit any participating pharmacy. For additional information or assistance, please contact MedStar Family Choice Member Services at **888-404-3549**.

Most people older than 6 months of age should be vaccinated. However, there are some rare exceptions for people who should not get the flu shot:

- People with flu symptoms or suspected with the flu virus.
- People with severe, life-threatening allergies to the flu vaccine or any ingredient in the vaccine such as eggs, gelatin, antibiotics, or other ingredients.

Even with the flu shot, you may get a cold or other virus during flu season. If you cannot visit your primary care doctor, MedStar Family Choice members can reach a doctor live using MedStar eVisit or by calling the Nurse Advice Line at **855-210-6204**. To learn more or sign up for MedStar eVisit, please visit **MedStarFamilyChoice.com/eVisit**.

*Source: [CDC.gov/Flu/Prevent/Keyfacts.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/Flu/Prevent/Keyfacts.htm)

Did you know?

- You can spread the flu before you know you are sick. Most people are contagious at least one day before having symptoms, and five to seven days after becoming sick.
- The time from when a person is exposed to the flu virus to when symptoms begin is about one to four days, with an average of about two days.
- People with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), pregnant women, and young children are especially at risk for flu-related complications.

Source: [CDC.gov/Flu/KeyFacts.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/Flu/KeyFacts.htm)

Use good habits to help stop germs.

Want to stop cold and flu in their tracks?

- 1. Avoid close contact.**
- 2. Stay home when you are sick.**
- 3. Cover your mouth and nose.**
- 4. Clean your hands.**
- 5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.**
- 6. Practice other good health habits.**

Source: [CDC.gov/Flu/Protect/Habits.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/Flu/Protect/Habits.htm)

Fall into wellness and earn gift cards!

MedStar Family Choice cares about your health. Yearly physical exams are important to keep you and your family healthy. Your health and wellness is so important to MedStar Family Choice that we offer gift cards to members who get their screenings (tests) and immunizations (shots) each year! Without screenings, you may not know of health issues that could get worse without treatment

Our dedicated Outreach department is here to help you and your family with scheduling any of the following appointments with your doctor:

- Yearly physicals
- Well-child visits
- Lead testing
- Mammograms
- Pap smears
- Diabetic testing



MedStar Family Choice members could receive up to \$150 for getting your baby's six well-child visits before 15 months of age and a lead test, \$100 for your first prenatal care visit during the first three months of pregnancy, \$50 for your first postpartum visit within 21 to 56 days of delivery, \$25 for completing well-child visits for ages 3 to 11, \$25 for mail order delivery of diabetes, asthma, or high blood pressure medication, \$50 for completing a mammogram if 50 or older, \$50 for adolescent physicals (ages 12 to 21), up to \$175 for diabetic lab tests, eye exams, and lowering your A1C, and more!

For your convenience, MedStar Family Choice also offers mobile and in-home health services to assist you with getting the care you need. Please contact us for assistance.

Learn more at [MedStarFamilyChoice.com](https://www.MedStarFamilyChoice.com).

Nurse advice line available 24/7.

Feeling sick or need medical advice? A registered nurse is just a phone call away. The Nurse Advice Line (**855-210-6204**) is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

- Call and talk to a registered nurse to help you figure out what to do or where to go based on your symptoms.
- The nurse can provide you with nearby urgent care locations if need be.

Emergency Care is for when you need care right away for a serious, sudden injury or illness. Therefore, non-emergent care can take longer in an Emergency Room.



See your doctor via telehealth and video visits.

MedStar Family Choice is committed to providing care during COVID-19. To assist with any healthcare needs, many MedStar Health and MedStar Family Choice providers are offering telehealth options.

All MedStar Health providers can now see patients through online video visits. MedStar Health Video Visits are similar to an in-person office visit, except you see your provider using a tablet, smartphone, or computer from your own home.

If you need to see your doctor or a specialist, call to see if they offer telehealth or MedStar Health Video Visits. If this type of appointment is appropriate, you can schedule a video visit the same way you would an in-person office visit.



Note: To have a video visit with your provider, you will need a smartphone or a computer and/or laptop with a camera and microphone. If you want more information to help prepare for your visit, or if you have trouble connecting, you can visit our MedStar Health Video Visits patient experience website at MyVideoVisit.MedStarHealth.org.

Online check-in available at even more MedStar Health Urgent Care locations.

MedStar Health Urgent Care patients now can have more control of their experience through online check-in, which allows patients to reserve their spot in line. The convenient, easy-to-use service is now offered at all 33 MedStar Health Urgent Care and Righttime Medical sites in Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Northern Virginia, based on a successful pilot program.

The online check-in program allows patients to view current wait times online and choose an arrival time that works for them, including “next available.” They are then able to wait at home, at work, or wherever they are most comfortable. The online check-in system lets consumers see exactly how many people are in line ahead of them, so they can gauge how soon they will be seen. In most cases, patients who check in online have shorter waits than patients who walk in.

Need help managing your health problems?

We understand that some health problems are hard to manage on your own. MedStar Family Choice has nurses and social workers who can help you take better control of your health conditions. We also have a nurse who can help you if you have a high-risk pregnancy.

You can learn more about our Complex Case Management and other Case Management programs on our website at MedStarFamilyChoice.com. If you would like to join one of our programs, you can call **410-933-2200, option 2**.

Denial of Payment Letters

As a Medicaid recipient, you cannot be billed for any covered service. But due to a change in regulation, you will now receive a letter if a claim for a medical service or treatment is denied.

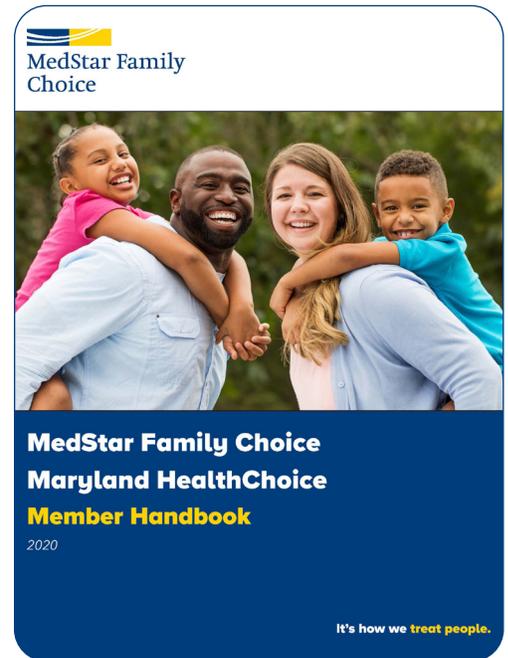
A Denial of Payment letter will be sent if MedStar Family Choice's Claims department reviewed and denied the payment for a service. The letter will include a clear explanation why the claim was denied. Claims could be denied for third-party liability, services from out-of-network providers, costs for optional services, and out-of-state services.

You may want to share a copy of the letter with your doctor to discuss next steps. MedStar Family Choice sends copies of Denial of Payment letters to doctors. If your doctor would like to talk to MedStar Family Choice about this decision, please have them call **800-261-3371**.

The MedStar Family Choice complaint, grievance, and appeal procedure can be found on our website **MedStarFamilyChoice.com** or in your member handbook. If you do not have access to our website, you may call our Member Services department at **888-404-3549** for a copy of the process. The process includes information on:

- How to file a complaint, grievance, or appeal, and the differences between them
- How quickly we will respond to you
- What to do if you do not agree with our decision

To request documents used to make claim decisions or if you have any questions, please call MedStar Family Choice Member Services at **888-404-3549**. If you have a concern about a decision made by MedStar Family Choice, members always have the right to contact the HealthChoice Enrollee Help Line at **800-284-4510** Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.



MedStar Family Choice Facebook Group

We encourage all members to join our new Facebook group to remain connected.

This group will include information about member benefits, events, healthy tips, provider scheduling recommendations, and more.

Visit [Bit.ly/MFCGroup](https://bit.ly/MFCGroup) and click on "+ Join Group" to see our posts.



Free Interpreter Services Available

If you know a MedStar Family Choice member who does not speak English—or doesn't speak it well—call Member Services toll-free at **888-404-3549**. We have interpreters to help members when visiting their doctors.

We will also provide an interpreter to help members who do not speak English or read written information sent by Member Services. If you or someone you know is deaf or has trouble hearing, a TTY line is available. Just call **800-508-6975**.

In addition, members can access Maryland Relay for TTY assistance. MedStar Family Choice also has people available who can use sign language to help you during doctor visits. You, or someone who can speak for you, must let the Member Services representative know that you need an interpreter.

Contact us anytime you need help!

Please contact MedStar Family Choice if you have any questions or concerns about the services we provide. The MedStar Family Choice staff is available Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

You can also call our Member Services department at **888-404-3549** toll free, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Please call during normal business hours to have your needs addressed. You may leave us a non-urgent message after hours. Calls received after normal business hours will be returned the next business day.



Important Numbers to Know:

Outreach and Care Management phone: **800-905-1722** or **410-933-2200**

Case Management fax: **855-829-2209** or **410-933-2209**

Utilization Management fax: **888-243-1790** or **410-933-2274**

Outreach fax: **888-991-2232** or **410-933-2232**

Member Services phone: **888-404-3549**

Nurse Advice Line phone: **855-210-6204**, 24 hours a day/seven days a week

Earn gift cards with the Momma & Me program.

Did you know MedStar Family Choice members who are pregnant may be eligible for the Momma & Me program? Members in the Momma & Me program could receive up to \$200 in gift cards for completing their OB appointments. Please call **410-933-3057** for more information.

Moms-to-be can also earn \$35 in gift cards for completing the MedStar Family Choice Healthy Life Portal Momma & Me online workshop.

- Earn \$25 in gift cards for completing the Prenatal/Breastfeeding course
- Earn \$10 in gift cards for completing Infant Safety courses and enjoy access to topics like:
 - Healthy Weight Gain
 - Labor and Delivery
 - Crib Safety ... and many more

Log in and register at:

MedStarFamilyChoiceHealthyLife.com.



Change your address or Medicaid information.

It is essential that we have your most up-to-date contact information to get important health plan information to you as quickly as possible. MedStar Family Choice members* can update their contact information at any time by following the steps below:

- Log into your account at **MarylandHealthConnection.gov**.
- Click the "Change My Information" quick link.
- Change, review, and confirm that your information is accurate.
- Report any changes necessary.
- Provide your electronic signature and SUBMIT.
- Select COMPLETE THE ENROLLMENT PROCESS.

For free assistance in changing your Medicaid information, please visit

MarylandHealthConnection.gov/Find-Help/In-Person-Assistance/#tool or call **855-642-8572 (TTY: 855-642-8573)**.

*Disabled members need to go through their case manager at their local Department of Social Services to make changes to their contact information. For more information, please visit **MyDHRBenefits.DHR.State.MD.us**.

Pregnancy and you.

If you are thinking about becoming pregnant:

- Talk to your doctor—you should be in your best health before you become pregnant!
- Stop smoking
- Stop alcohol and illegal drug use
- Determine if your current medications are safe to take during early pregnancy
- Confirm your immunizations are up-to-date
- Discuss safe sex practices to avoid infections
- Determine whether you need to take any vitamins or folic acid

Once you become pregnant:

- Make an appointment with your Ob/Gyn provider as soon as possible. Women who receive early and regular prenatal care have healthier babies!
- You will need to have urine screening tests, blood tests, cervical cancer screenings, and cultures several times during the pregnancy. Your provider is unable to check your baby directly and this is the only way for the provider to determine if you are still healthy enough to carry your baby.
- You may have several sonograms during your pregnancy. Sonograms are used to check the baby's growth, the baby's anatomy (are things looking normal), the amount of fluid around your baby, and the health of your placenta and/or cervix. Sonograms are never indicated just to determine the sex of your baby.

What do to prepare for your baby:

- Avoid secondhand smoke, alcohol, and drugs
- Sign up for childbirth classes



- Pick a pediatrician (baby doctor) and make an appointment to meet them
- Decide if you are going to breastfeed or bottle feed your baby
- Gather baby supplies, including car seat, crib or bassinet, clothes, diapers, feeding supplies
- Ask family and friends for help at home after you deliver
- Don't forget during that first week home, you will need to schedule your baby's first pediatrician appointment and your postpartum appointment! You need to be healthy to care for your baby!

MedStar Family Choice cares about your health and the health of your baby! Please call us using the numbers below with any questions or concerns:

Call **410-933-2200, option 2** to speak with a nurse Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

After business hours, call **855-210-6204** for the 24/7 Nurse Advice Line.

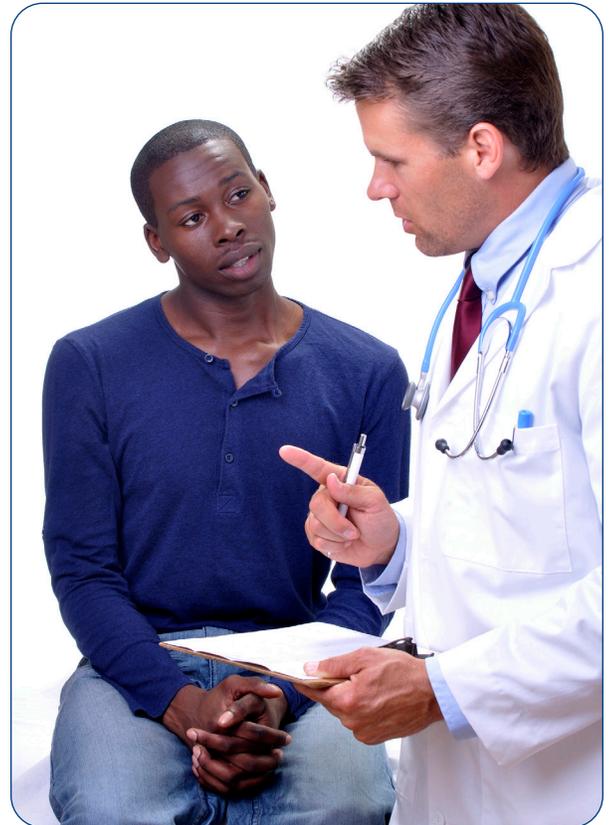
Protect the privacy of your health information.

Did you know that there are laws that protect your privacy? MedStar Family Choice values the importance of keeping your protected health information safe and secure. We have policies in place to do so.

MedStar Family Choice recognizes the importance of patient privacy. Before disclosing your protected health information over the phone, MedStar Family Choice is required to verify your identity and authority to access specific protected information. To do this, our staff members will ask you for identifiers such as your name, address, or date of birth before giving you any protected health information.

MedStar Family Choice is required to maintain the privacy of your written and electronic protected health information. Paper documents are kept in secure locations. Electronic protected health information is encrypted on our devices. Employees may only use or disclose protected health information for a purpose permitted by law or applicable requirement and access is based on their specific job duties. Our employees also receive training on how to protect our members' health information. MedStar Family Choice also employs additional methods to secure e-mail communications.

With your enrollment packet, you received a copy of our Notice of Privacy Practices. This important document in part describes how MedStar may use and disclose your medical information, how you can access this information, and how to report a complaint if you feel your privacy has been violated. If you have any questions related to protecting your health information or would like to request a copy of the Notice of Privacy Practices, please contact Member Services at **888-404-3549**.



MedStar Family Choice survey results are online.

MedStar Family Choice wants you to stay informed on how we are doing. For updated information on survey results such as HEDIS, Satisfaction Surveys, System Performance Reviews, EPSDT audits, and the Consumer Report Card, please visit the MedStar Family Choice Quality web page:

[MedStarFamilyChoice.com/Maryland-HealthChoice/For-Maryland-HealthChoice-Members/Quality](https://www.MedStarFamilyChoice.com/Maryland-HealthChoice/For-Maryland-HealthChoice-Members/Quality)

Paper copies are available upon request by calling **888-404-3549**. As we continue to improve and strive for high scores, your dedication to quality health care is very much appreciated.

HEDIS is a registered trademark of the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA).

CAHPS is a registered trademark of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

This October, MedStar Family Choice is proud to participate in National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Breast cancer is one of the most common kinds of cancer in women after skin cancer. About 1 in 8 women born today in the United States will get breast cancer at some point.

The good news is that most women can survive breast cancer if it's found and treated early.

- **If you are a woman age 50 and over, be sure to get a mammogram every two years. Talk to a doctor about your risk for breast cancer, especially if a close family member had breast or ovarian cancer. Your doctor can help you decide when and how often to get mammograms.**

MedStar Family Choice Member Wellness Days offer free health services including mammograms, diabetic labs, diabetic retinal exams, lead screening, and adult physicals. Gift card incentives for completing certain member screenings will also be available at the event. To find a list of events near you, please visit [Bit.ly/MedStarEvents](https://bit.ly/MedStarEvents).

For more information or to RSVP to a Member Wellness Day event, please call our Outreach department at **800-905-1722, option 1**.

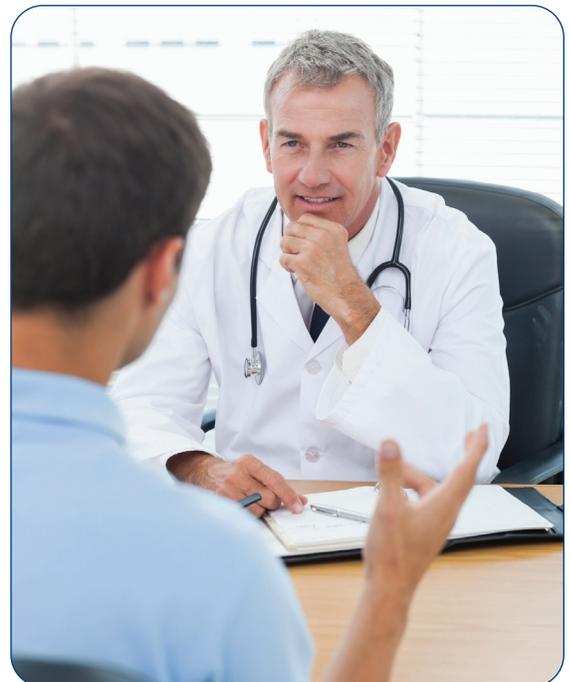


Your doctor is here to help with all of your healthcare needs.

Your doctor or primary care provider (PCP) can manage much of your healthcare needs. You may not need a specialty referral in many cases. Your PCP has the best relationship with you or your child and knows your health history. Your doctor should be the first person to discuss any health concerns with you prior to giving you a referral to see a specialist.

It is important to follow up on all appointments that you have scheduled with your PCP. If there are any problems noted, your PCP can take care of them right away. If you feel like you want a second opinion, you have the right to get one from another in-network provider or a specialist.

Always talk openly and voice your opinion with your PCP, so you can make a decision together regarding the need to see a specialist.



Results of MedStar Family Choice's annual quality review.

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) is required to review the quality of care provided to Maryland Medicaid members who are enrolled with any of the Maryland HealthChoice Managed Care Organizations (MCOs).

To ensure that the services provided to members meet established regulations, MDH uses Qlarant, an outside agency, to review quality and performance.

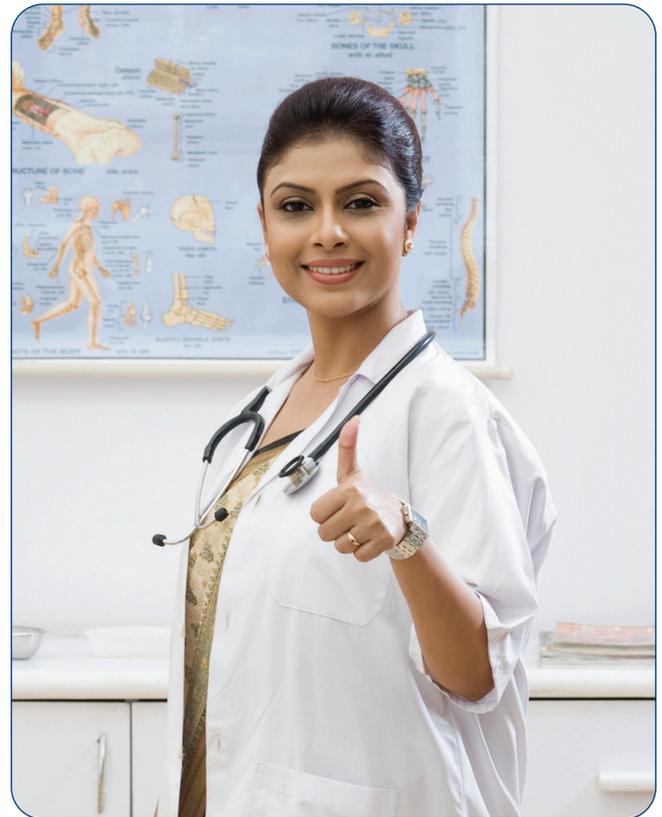
This review looks at the following standards:

- Quality Assurance and Governance
- Delegation of Activities
- Credentialing and re-credentialing
- Enrollee rights
- Availability and accessibility
- Utilization review
- Continuity of care
- Health education
- Outreach
- Fraud and abuse

For the 2020 audit, MedStar Family Choice received a finding of “met” for all scored elements/components reviewed.

MedStar Family Choice is committed to continuous quality improvement. Qlarant made recommendations and identified areas of focus for the next review.

MedStar Family Choice actively reviews current processes and procedures with the goal of achieving 100% compliance in 2021.



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The MedStar Family Choice member newsletter is a publication of MedStar Family Choice.

Submit new items for the next issue to darin.a.tambascio@medstar.net.

For more information on your plan or anything in this newsletter, please visit MedStarFamilyChoice.com.

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