

Provider View



February 19th, 2026

More Than Just a Short Month



February is one of my favorite months for many reasons: Groundhog's Day, the Super Bowl (Go Seahawks!), Valentine's Day and President's Day all take place during the shortest month of the year. February is also American Heart Month, an important opportunity to focus on cardiovascular health and the role each of us plays in preventing and managing heart disease. What are some ways we can lead more heart-healthy lives? One small habit I've adopted is taking the stairs over the elevator whenever I can—it's a simple way to stay active during the day. I invite you to share your thoughts and ideas with

me at AHP.Providers@Avera.org.

In this month's ProviderView, we will share an exciting announcement that marks a positive step forward and reflects continued progress at Avera Health Plans. The coming months will be dedicated to thoughtful preparation, clear communication and support. We hope that you will share in our excitement.

Thank you for your continued partnership—we look forward to moving forward together with clarity and confidence.

Sincerely,

Josephine

Vice President, Provider Network Development

Short month, big news—here's what's happening in February's ProviderView:

- [An exciting announcement!](#)
- [An overview of Secret Shopper Surveys & what to expect in the coming months](#)
- [Update on Cohere policies](#)
- [A reminder for our providers](#)
- [We want to hear from you!](#)

Epic Implementation to Enhance Provider Workflows with Avera Health Plans

We have some exciting news to share. On May 30, Avera Health Plans and Avera Health System will go live with many Epic applications, including internal and external systems designed to integrate enrollment, claims, authorization and engagement into a single system. We will transition the current Avera Health Plans provider portal to a new one called Avera System Link built on Epic tools.

Some of the benefits you will experience when using Avera System Link include optimized workflows, enhanced data accuracy, faster prior authorizations and more efficient medical management. If you're a non-Avera provider who needs Avera EHR access for your patients, you'll have extra permissions in Avera System Link and use a convenient, single login for both functions.

Prior to the go-live, we'll share updates in ProviderView and other communications about Avera System Link registration and training, which will include live Webex sessions, tip sheets and other reference materials. Training is part of a successful plan for implementation due to Avera System Link's powerful functionality and range of processes.

Secret Shopper: What to Expect?

As a reminder, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) require health insurance plans to conduct a Secret Shopper Survey to assess appointment wait times. During the survey, secret shoppers will contact your office posing as patients to evaluate how quickly appointments can be scheduled for various services. These surveys will be conducted through May.

The survey ensures compliance with federal standards for timely access to care, helps maintain a high level of service for our members (your patients) and creates a positive experience for them.

Here are the wait time standards mandated by CMS:

<u>Provider Specialty Type</u>	<u>Appointments Must Be Available Within</u>
Behavioral Health	10 business days
Primary Care (Routine)	15 business days

Thank you for providing timely and excellent care to our members. Be on the lookout for next month's ProviderView, which will include more details.

Updates on Cohere Policies

Avera Health Plans partners with Cohere Health to manage prior authorizations for cardiology, radiology and musculoskeletal services through Cohere's clinical intelligence platform, supporting standardized review criteria and a streamlined digital submission process for providers.

Cohere periodically updates its clinical policies, consistent with industry standards and similar to Avera Health Plans' annual policy review process. Recently, Cohere implemented updates to several of its medical policies.

To ensure accurate and timely prior authorization submissions, providers and their staff should log into the [Cohere portal](#) to review the most current policy information and confirm alignment with updated criteria.

Verifying Benefits, Eligibility and Member ID Cards

As a reminder, we kindly ask that you verify your patient's benefits, eligibility and member ID cards, as there may have been changes into the new year.

Tell Us More!

If there is any topic you would like to see featured in the ProviderView, please email us at AHP.Providers@Avera.org. We would love to hear from you.