

Reducing Disparities in Use of Support and Advocacy Services for Medicare Beneficiaries

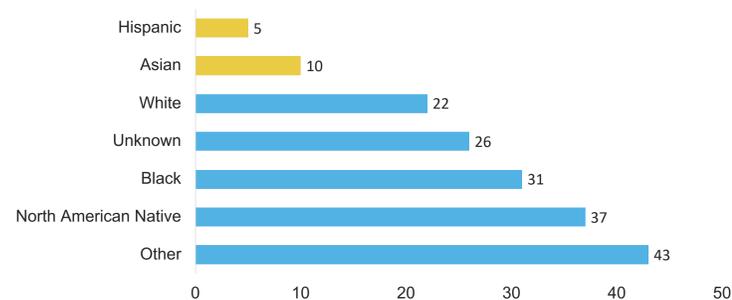
Introduction

Beneficiary and Family Centered Care–Quality Improvement Organizations (BFCC-QIOs) help Medicare beneficiaries exercise their right to high-quality healthcare by providing case reviews when beneficiaries have a concern about their care.

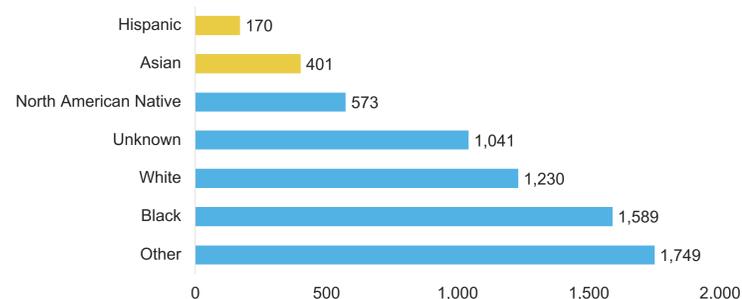
The BFCC National Coordinating and Oversight Review Center (NCORC) conducted analyses of characteristics of the Medicare beneficiaries who used BFCC-QIO services and identified that Hispanic and Asian beneficiaries used services at a lower rate than other racial and ethnic groups.

Service Termination and Discharge Appeal Rates and Quality of Care Review Rates by Race and Ethnicity per 100,000 Beneficiaries, 2019–2022

Quality of Care Review Rates



Service Termination & Discharge Appeal Rate



Data & Methods

The BFCC NCORC conducted semi-structured, qualitative interviews with leaders of community organizations serving Hispanic and Asian Medicare beneficiaries to understand:

- Why do Hispanic and Asian beneficiaries utilize BFCC-QIO services at relatively low rates compared to beneficiaries of other racial and ethnic backgrounds, including perceived facilitators and barriers to use of BFCC-QIO services or understanding of health information?
- What communication and outreach methods would be most effective at notifying them of their rights?

We conducted a total of 8 interviews with individuals representing 6 healthcare or advocacy organizations. We identified potential participant organizations through an online search and the BFCC NCORC stakeholder network.

Key Findings and Highlights

Facilitators to Use of BFCC-QIO Services



Caregivers & family

- Caregivers and family members can serve as potential resources for beneficiaries to assist with communication and decision-making.
- Many Hispanic beneficiaries live in multigenerational homes, and stakeholders frequently target caregivers and family members as primary points of contact to increase awareness of their services.



Simple, respectful messaging

- Messages for seniors must be clear and simple.
- Because many seniors are on fixed incomes, free services should be clearly labeled to increase the likelihood of use.
- Acknowledging seniors' (potentially negative) experiences with the healthcare system and reassuring them that they have a right to use services are important.



Trusted organization

- Trusted organizations named by stakeholders include nonprofit organizations, churches, schools, senior centers, healthcare facilities, libraries, and local groups.
- While stakeholders indicated that seniors prefer to receive information in person, they also find information through social media posts and family and trusted organizations in their preferred language.

Barriers to Use of BFCC-QIO Services



Language & literacy barriers

- Stakeholders emphasize the importance of using materials with very simple vocabulary and providing them in their preferred language.
- Even when materials are provided in a preferred language, regional differences in dialect may impeded understanding.
- Paperwork with small font size, large amounts of text, or forms may be perceived as intimidating.



Complicated technology

- Although many seniors have mobile phones, some seniors are not comfortable using electronic devices or may not have access to a computer.
- Accessing services by phone may be discouraging if the system requires seniors to key in responses or lacks the option to speak with someone in their preferred language.



Cultural norms & experiences

- Cultural factors, such as taboos around aging, needing assistance, or dying and seeming ungrateful or difficult when asking for help, were noted as barriers to use of services.
- Stakeholders also remarked that there is a sense of fear among older adults that they may suffer consequences if they use services, either financially or otherwise.

Discussion

Stakeholders shared many strategies to reach their community members and highlighted approaches to overcome cultural and logistic barriers. Many strategies could be adapted within the BFCC-QIO context to increase awareness of beneficiary protection services and reduce barriers that may be limiting use of BFCC-QIO services by Asian and Hispanic beneficiaries.

Have questions about the BFCC-QIO program?
Scan the QR code to find the QIO in your State.

