



Applied
Self-Direction

Advancing Best Practices to Expand Access to Self-Direction

August 29, 2023

UnitedHealthcare Community & State National Advisory Board



**Independent advisory council;
established in 2012**



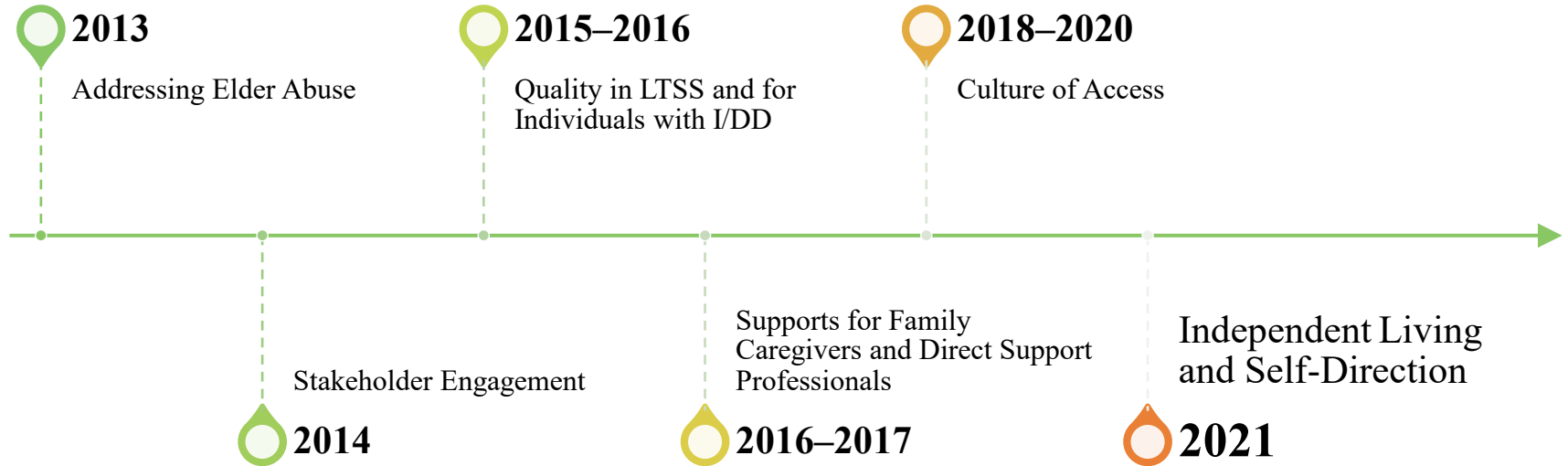
Aging and disability advocates, health plan members and family members of individuals with special health care needs.



Advocacy on design and delivery systems that supports individuals with special health care needs.

Makes recommendations, champions innovations, and advises on member engagement strategies that support service approaches.

NAB Areas of Focus



Applied Self-Direction

We are a mission-driven organization with one goal:
to advance self-direction.



We work with states and stakeholders to create new self-direction programs and optimize existing programs across the country.



Just as a mechanic helps make sure your car runs well, our team helps self-direction programs run smoothly and safely.



When something isn't working as intended, we help diagnose and fix operational challenges.



Today's Session

- Overview of the major themes and findings from an environmental scan of self-direction in UnitedHealthcare Community & State health plans
- In-depth examination of efforts to advance self-direction in Ohio
 - Advocate perspective, Jennifer Kucera
 - State perspective, Jesse Wyatt
 - Discussion on approach, lessons learned, and next steps



UnitedHealthcare Environmental Scan of Self-Direction



Approach

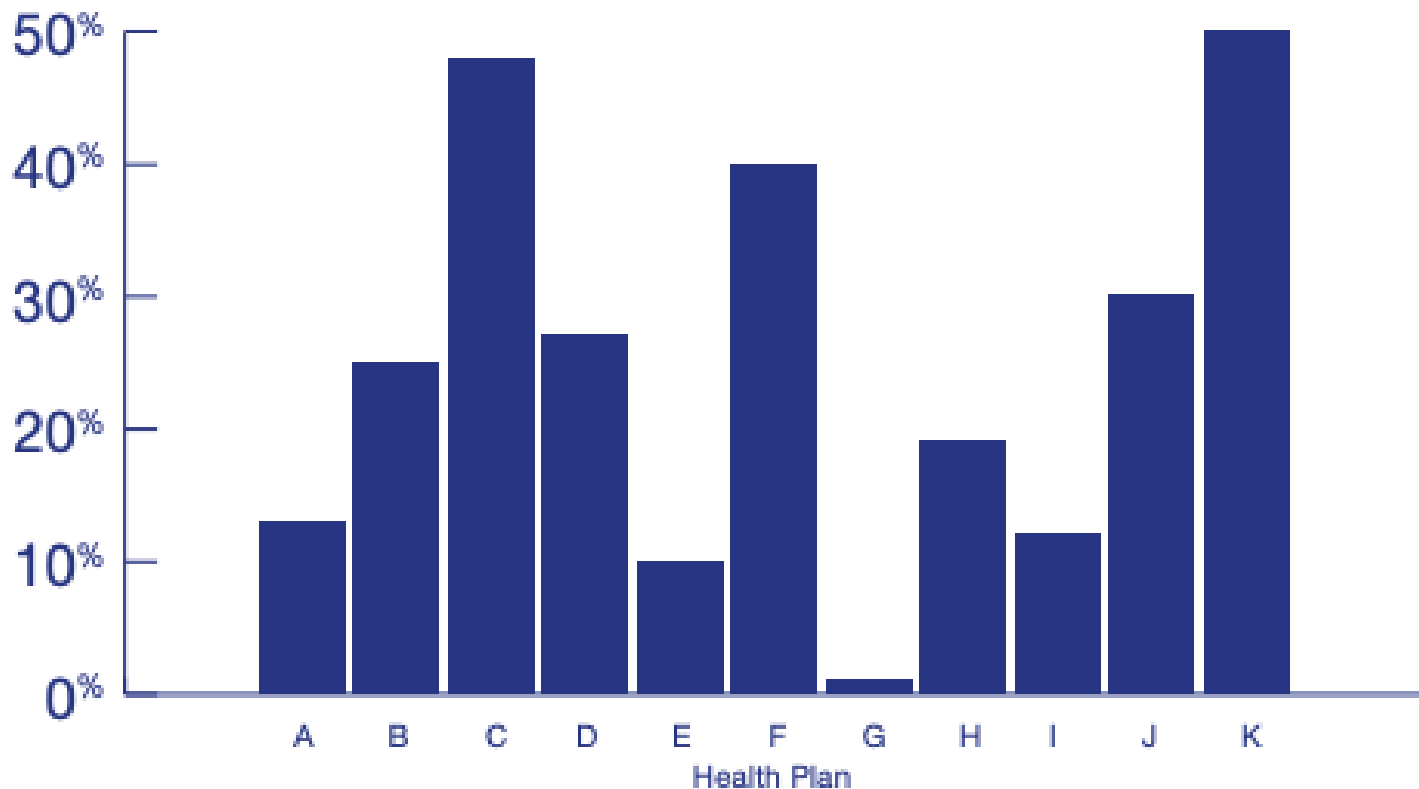
- In 2022, program administrators from UnitedHealthcare Community & State health plans across the country responded to an in-depth survey on self-direction, and select administrators participated in follow-up interviews
- Topics included:
 - Opportunities and challenges for self-direction
 - Supports for members who self-direct
 - Enrollment
 - Quality
 - Pandemic impact



Engagement

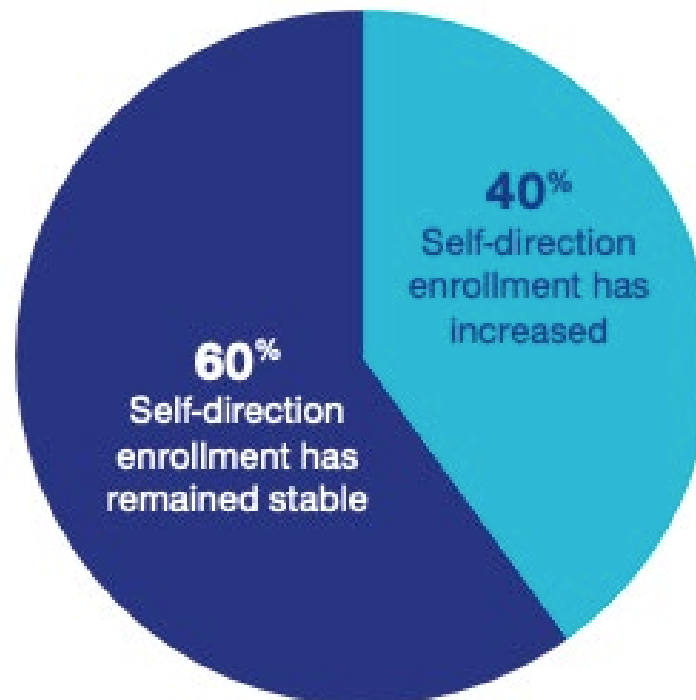
- According to the estimates reported by each plan, member engagement in self-direction varies widely with anywhere from 50% to 0.45% of the eligible LTSS population self-directing.

Percentage of Members Self-Directing by Health Plan



Enrollment

- The majority of UnitedHealthcare health plans (60%) reported that self-direction has remained stable while some health plans (40%) noted a recent increase in self-direction enrollment since the pandemic.
- No UnitedHealthcare health plans reported a recent decrease in self-direction enrollment.



Benefits of Self-Direction

- Health plan leaders described numerous benefits of self-direction for members, including:
 - ❑ Flexible choice of direct care worker
 - ❑ Greater control and autonomy
 - ❑ Lower cost compared to traditional services
 - ❑ Ability to set the rate of pay
 - ❑ Improved coverage in rural settings
 - ❑ Avoiding institutionalization
 - ❑ Mitigate labor shortages



Challenges for Self-Direction

- Health plan leaders also identified numerous challenges and barriers to the expansion of self-direction, including:
 - ❑ Worker scarcity particularly for those members who do not already know someone they wish to hire
 - ❑ Complex requirements to get started
 - ❑ Competition with agency-based programs that in some cases offer higher pay, better benefits, and/or offer more options for backup care
 - ❑ Burdensome electronic visit verification (EVV) requirements



Best Practices (1/2)

- A commitment to the belief that any member can succeed in self-direction with appropriate support, including involving authorized representatives or providing tools and resources to aid in recruiting workers.
- Robust, consistent training for all program administrators and case managers on the philosophy and operations of self-directed services.
- Consistently well-documented procedures to introduce the self-direction option to all eligible members.
- Intentional efforts to improve and enhance information and assistance resources available to self-directing members



Best Practices (2/2)

- Cultivation of strong community partnerships both with Financial Management Services (FMS) entities and other community organizations that support program operations (e.g., self-advocates, advocacy groups, CILs, and AAAs).
- Where state policy permits, empowering members to oversee the training of their workers and providing training resources as an option, rather than a requirement.
- Proactive engagement with self-directing members regularly to solicit feedback on their individual experience as well as their overarching feedback on ways to improve the program.



Advocacy Opportunities (1/2)

- Examine enrollment processes and remove obstacles to accessing self-directed services.
- Increase wage ranges in self-direction to be more competitive with agency-based wages.
- Provide equitable access to health care benefits for workers in self-direction and agency workers.
- Make any new flexibility during the pandemic permanent to allow family members to be paid caregivers.



Advocacy Opportunities (2/2)

- Provide standardized guidance on self-direction implementation, including a program manual and/or formal regulations.
- Expand the services that can be self-directed by amending the waiver application.
- Increase reimbursement rates for FMS providers to better reflect the size and scope of their responsibilities.
- Reduce or simplify requirements for EVV implementation within the requirements of federal law.



Advancing Lessons Learned in Ohio (1/2)

- As part of the Environmental Scan, we identified Ohio as a state with significant opportunities to strengthen self-direction
 - Strong advocate community pushing for self-direction
 - Supportive state and AAA leadership
 - Engaged FMS leadership
 - Low enrollment across eligible members



Advancing Lessons Learned in Ohio (2/2)

- UnitedHealthcare sponsored a Self-Direction Summit in Ohio in April 2023
 - The goal was to provide an opportunity for key stakeholders to come together to share their unique perspectives on how self-direction is going in Ohio and how to work together to address challenges
 - Stakeholder participants included advocates, Financial Management Services (FMS) providers, state staff, AAA staff, and representatives from all MCOs in the state
 - Applied Self-Direction facilitated the day-long meeting



Expanding Self-Direction in Ohio: Advocate Perspective



Expanding Self-Direction in Ohio: State Perspective



Expanding Self-Direction in Ohio: Discussion





Thank You!



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