



Member Advocacy Council & Enrollee Advisory Committee Meeting

February 25, 2026

BlueCross BlueShield Arizona
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Health Choice

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Agenda

- Welcome
- Break-out session
  - HCA
  - HCP
- Joint Session
  - AHCCCS Renewal – Dannery Morales
  - Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS): Rating of the Health Plan
  - Addressing Social Needs and Social Risks
  - Healthy Eating Strategies and Resources: Practical Tips and Local Guidance for Balanced Nutrition

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Purpose



The purpose of the Member Advisory Committee and Advocacy Council (MAC) is to:

- ✓ Gain input from you as members of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona Health Choice and Health Choice Pathway HMO D-SNP
- ✓ Provide a place for you to share your feedback and help us make improvements
- ✓ Enhance overall Member experience.

As part of participating on the MAC, you will be asked for your commitment by sharing and providing feedback on access to care, services and products that are offered by **US**.

The feedback you provide is confidential and will help us to evaluate and implement improvement activities to improve existing programs, services and member communication materials.

Housekeeping Rules

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Be present.



Listen attentively & don't interrupt.

Seek first to understand then to be understood.

Listen to other's opinions.



Participation is key!

Respect the group's time and keep comments brief and to the point.



Speak honestly.

Share ideas, ask questions and contribute to discussion.

Honest and constructive discussions provide best results.



Be respectful.

Respect other's point of view without agreeing with them is okay.

It's okay to disagree, respectfully and openly without being disagreeable.



We will note any pending issues and provide updates during future committee meetings.



HCA Breakout Session

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Agenda

- Arizona Olmstead Plan
- Overview of Vocational Services
- Member Benefits and Rewards



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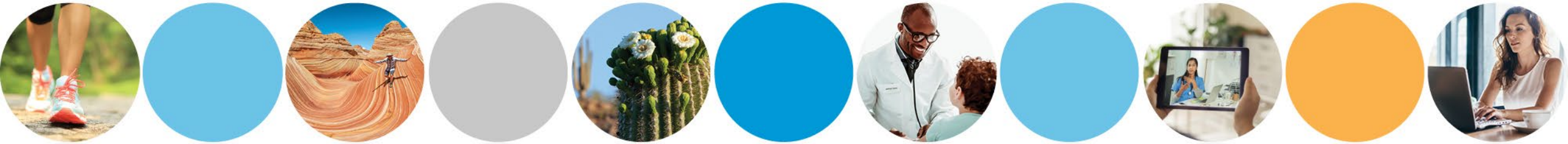
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Arizona Olmstead Plan

FEBRUARY 25, 2026

PRESENTER: JOSHUA NAPOLEON



What it the Olmstead Plan

- **Olmstead v. L.C.** Arizona Olmstead Plan (azahcccs.gov):
  - On June 22, 1999, the United States Supreme Court ruled in Olmstead v. L.C. that unjustified segregation of individuals with disabilities violates Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This landmark decision established a legal framework for integrating people with disabilities into their communities.
- According to this ruling, states must provide community-based services to individuals with disabilities who would otherwise be eligible for institutional care if:
  - The state's treatment professionals determine that community placement is appropriate,
  - The individual agrees with the placement, and
  - The placement is feasible, considering the state's resources and the needs of others receiving state-supported disability

Arizona's Olmstead Plan

- "AHCCCS has developed a new Arizona Olmstead Plan to enhance the service delivery system through integrated care and further ensure members live and receive services in the most appropriate integrated setting in their community. Development of the Olmstead Plan included working with different external stakeholders, such as members/peers and advocates, as well as providing education to and soliciting input/feedback from the community through a survey, four community forums, and a public comment period."
  - Original plan developed in 2001 and updated in 2003
  - New webpage on the AHCCCS website in 2021 and release of the Olmstead Survey, followed by a workgroup and series of community forums
- Current plan "is limited in scope to initiatives for which AHCCCS can have a direct impact on systemic change."

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Arizona Olmstead Plan - Summary Overview

#	Strategy
1	**Effective Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) for members to successfully reside in the community** – Increase housing choice and opportunities for individuals and ensure necessary support services are available to assist members to obtain and maintain the least restrictive, most integrated community setting possible.
2	**Reach-in discharge planning for hospital settings –** Increase the ease of access for care coordination and discharge planning for members in hospital settings, while reducing outpatient service barriers.
3	**Reach-in discharge planning for the justice system –** Improve discharge planning, reach-in care coordination, and service delivery for members exiting the justice system.
4	**Expansion of Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) for aging individuals with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) determinations –** Explore the feasibility of expanding HCBS for the aging SMI population.
5	**Workforce Development initiatives –** Implement programs and systems that will enhance the capacity, capability, and commitment of the health care workforce.
6	**High quality network to ensure members are served in the most effective and least restrictive manner –** Ensure services are provided by high quality network providers in a timely manner
7	**Person-centered planning enhancements -** Improve monitoring with service and treatment planning standards for Managed Care Organizations (MCOs).
8	**Aggregated Population Data -** Identify and monitor data to provide a systemic level review of members transitioning to least restrictive settings.

Olmstead Plan Updates

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Strategy #1: : Effective Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) for members to successfully reside in the community			
Objective #2: Expand access and range of housing settings for all eligible populations.			
Section	**Target Date**	**Performance Targets**	**Progress Summary**
2. A: Develop new transitional housing options to facilitate transition from residential, inpatient, the justice system, and housing instability to the least restrictive community-based settings	7/2025* 7/2026**	• Increase the number of transitional housing units to 50. • Maintain or exceed 95% occupancy across all units each month.	**10/2025:** Future updates on this project are accessible on the AHCCCS Housing Programs web page. The project construction was completed on 10/2025. ADOA has completed construction, and the building is now owned by ASH. AHCCCS is working to assist with communication between ASH and the Operator to enter into a lease agreement and open the transitional housing program.
2. B: Use covered Medicaid housing support services and partner with housing providers (e.g., Public Housing Authorities, 811 Project Rental Assistance, etc.) to expand permanent, community-based housing options.	7/2023 (Completed) 10/2026	• Establish baseline data of existing housing options provided to Medicaid members in conjunction with Medicaid covered services at the site. • Increase the number of housing units by 10%.	**10/2025:** AHCCCS continued efforts with the initiatives identified during the previous quarter. AHCCCS is working to capture all of the dedicated units statewide to improve tracking of the measure. Anticipated goal date is 1/2026. The AHCCCS Housing team and the Adult System of Care (ASOC) team work closely with the Continuums of Care (CoCs) to preserve these vouchers amid current federal funding challenges and potential reductions in permanent supportive housing subsidies.

*The Pathway to Hope construction is expected to be completed in June 2025.
** Changed from 7/2025 to 7/2026 as the Pathway to Hope construction is expected to be completed by June 2025, so pushing this date a year out allows AHCCCS to monitor the occupancy rates, which will be reported quarterly in this section post-launch

Olmstead Plan Updates

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Strategy #4: Expansion of Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) for aging individuals with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) determinations			
Objective #1: Explore options to provide medically necessary HCBS to the aging SMI population who do not meet institutional level of care criteria to become eligible for the Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS).			
Section	**Target Date**	**Performance Targets**	**Progress Summary**
A: Identify a group of individuals 65 years and older with an SMI designation who were denied ALTCS eligibility for medical reasons	3/2025		**10/2025:** Updates will be reported in a future reporting cycle. We continue to educate ourselves and work internally among departments to better understand this population and reasons for ALTCS denial for medical eligibility reasons.

Member Involvement

Member involvement is key to the success of the Olmstead Plan:



Members can participate in planning and feedback sessions to share their experiences and needs.

Advocating for personal and community needs helps us tailor services more effectively.

Utilizing available community resources and services ensures members receive comprehensive support.

Connecting with care coordinators provides personalized assistance

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How to Get Involve?

- **AHCCCS Contact Information:**
  - Community Forums: Participate in quarterly AHCCCS Community Forums to learn about accomplishments made during the quarter and provide input on the Olmstead Plan.
  - Visit the AHCCCS Office of Individual and Family Affairs (OIFA) web page to receive more information about these AHCCCS Community Forums, and other community presentations.
  - Website: Arizona Olmstead Plan (azahcccs.gov)
  - Email: Olmstead@azahcccs.gov at any time to share your input on the Olmstead Plan

AHCCCS
Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System

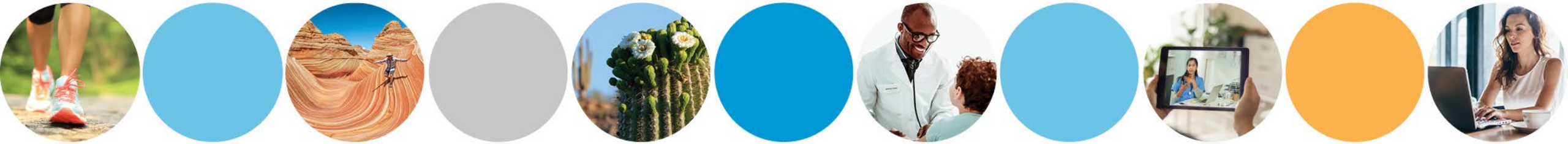
Arizona Olmstead Plan

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Employment Services Benefit

Cynthia M. Ross, MS, CRC, PRSS
Vocational Services Administrator



Why is Employment Important for Members?

Guiding Philosophy:

AHCCCS and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona Health Choice believe that every person has the capacity to work competitively in the community when the right kind of job and work environment is identified, and supports are present.





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The Benefits of Employment for Members



Social Impacts	Provides relationships and social connections Promotes full participation in society, independence and human rights



Psychological Impacts	Promotes recovery and rehabilitation Improves self-esteem, self-worth, purpose and identity. Provides structure and encourages productive activity Enhances quality of life and well being



Financial Impacts	Increases household income and decreases economic hardship Provides members with financial means to access nutritious food and safe housing Alleviates the stress of trying to pay bills and feed and clothe a family on an inadequate household income

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Vocational Services Program Descriptions

Supported Employment Services

- Are delivered at a provider and health plan level. This may include education, coaching, and services for securing and maintaining employment.
- These services are available to any member.

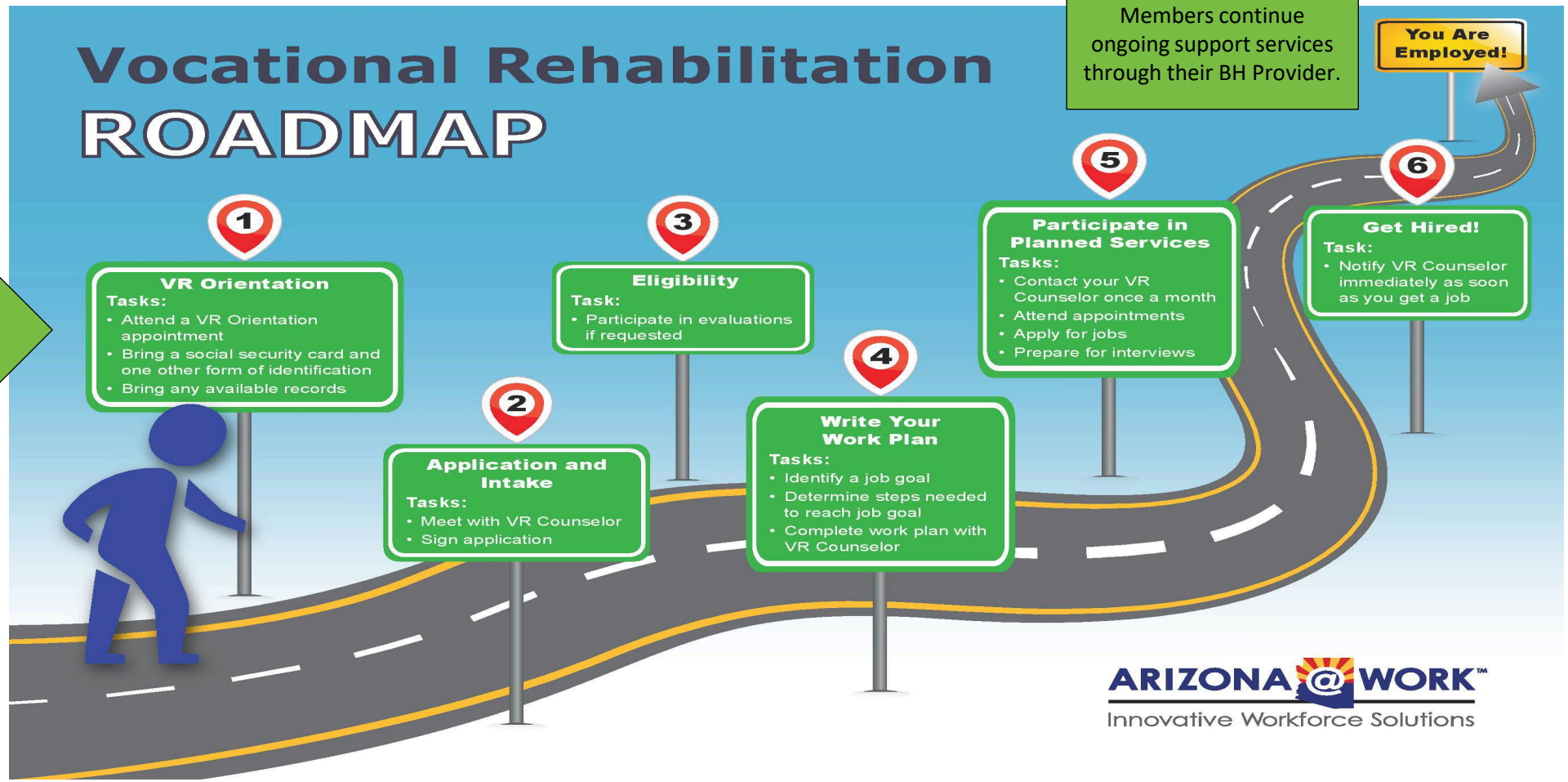
Vocational Rehabilitation

- Program provides a variety of services to persons with disabilities ages 14 and up, with the ultimate goal to prepare for, enter into or retain employment.
- These collaborative efforts with VR have resulted in numerous success stories.

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The Referral Process

A BH Provider or Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona Health Choice may refer interested and eligible members to RSA/VR.



Members continue ongoing support services through their BH Provider.

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Innovative Workforce Solutions

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Vocational Rehabilitation Eligibility Requirements



Eligibility Requirements

- Documented disability
  - You have a physical or mental impairment.
- Your impairment creates a substantial impediment to employment.
- You require VR services to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment.
- You can benefit from VR services in terms of achieving an employment outcome.

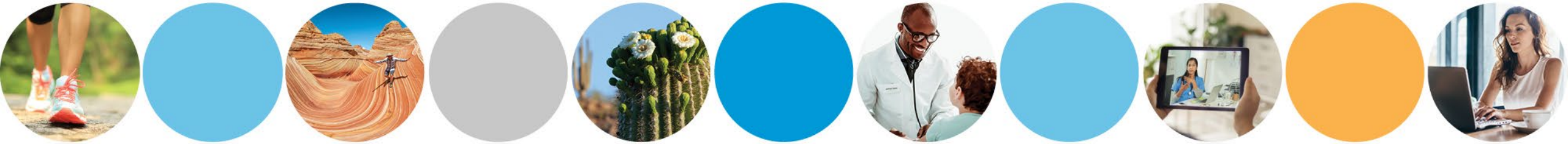
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Member Benefits and Rewards

Maria Reyes
Member Liaison Coordinator



Healthy Rewards Program

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Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona Health Choice - Earn Gift Cards!

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Babies, children, and teens

Taking time to schedule Well Visits for your little ones will keep them healthy.

- Well-Child visits – **up to $150 annually**
  - **$25 per visit** up to six visits during 0-15 months of age
  - **$25 for one visit** during 16-30 months of age
- Child and Adolescent Well-visits – **$25 annually**
  - For ages 3 to under 21



Moms-to-be

- Prenatal visit – First trimester (First 12 weeks of pregnancy) – **$25 annually**
- Postpartum visit (7 to 84 days after delivery) – **$25 annually**



Additional activities and screenings

- Breast Cancer Screening – **$25 annually**
  - For women ages 40 to 74 years of age
- Cervical Cancer Screening - **$25 annually**
  - For women ages 21 to 64 years of age

To Earn Your Rewards

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To begin earning your Healthy Rewards start by:

- Scheduling an appointment
- Complete your appointment



Upon completion of the visit(s)

- Contact Member Services with the following information:
  - Date of visit
  - Type of visit / service
  - Doctor's name





Reach US by:

- Email: HCHcomments@azblue.com
- Phone: 1-800-322-8670, TTY: 711

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona Health Choice Resources

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Resource: Member Services



Call Member Services at 1-800-322-8670, TTY 711

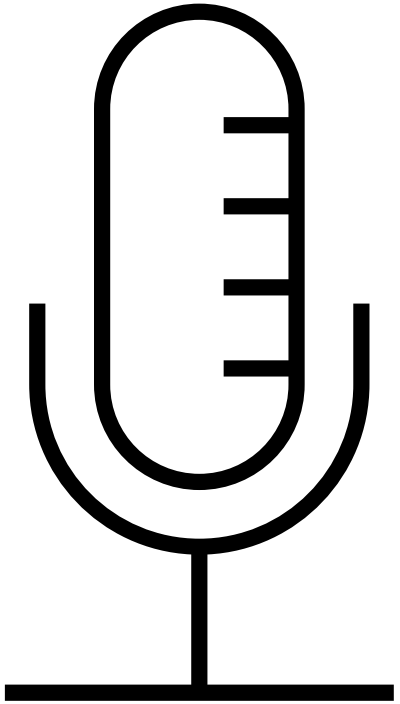
- For information and assistance
- To obtain language or American Sign Language interpretation services when working with your health plan or provider
- To obtain transportation services to your appointments
- Assist in locating a provider
- Pharmacy benefit information
- Change a primary care provider
- File a complaint

Hours of Operation

- 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- Monday – Friday (expect holidays)

Questions & Answers





Please complete Member Feedback Survey





Health Choice Pathway (HMO D-SNP) Breakout Session

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Agenda

- SilverSneakers
- NCQA: Access and Review of Plan Materials
- Q&A Session
  - Healthy Food
    - The benefits mentioned are a part of special supplemental program for the chronically ill. Not all members qualify, as other coverage criteria may also apply.
  - OTC
  - Incentive Highlight



SilverSneakers

Sarah Bobko



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Move How You Want, When You Want With SilverSneakers®



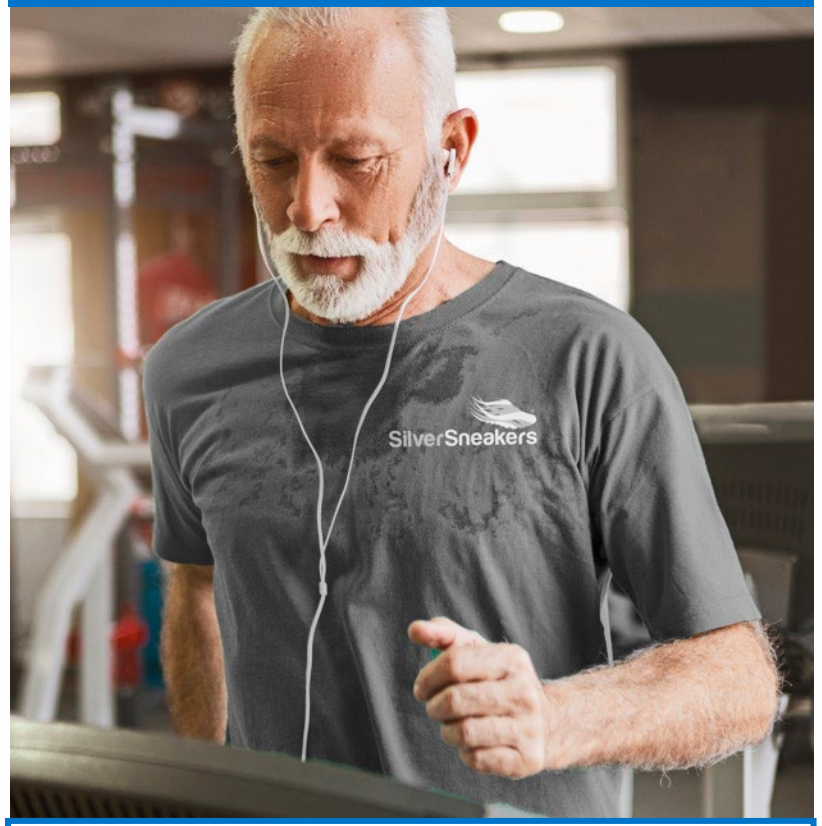
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Tivity Health is an independent and separate company contracted with Health Choice Pathway to provide health and wellness services to Health Choice Pathway HMO D-SNP members. Health Choice Pathway is a subsidiary of Blue Cross® Blue Shield® of Arizona, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

SilverSneakers®

With SilverSneakers, you're free to move:

IN THE GYM



Nationwide gym network with thousands of locations – **go to as many as you like**

AT HOME



LIVE and On-Demand classes led by SilverSneakers trained instructors – **convenience in the comfort of your home**

IN YOUR COMMUNITY



Fitness options outside of the gym – recreation centers, walking groups, workshops and more **in your community**

At-Home Exercise Kits

Strength
Exercise band

Walking
Pedometer

Yoga
Yoga Strap

Toning
Fitness Ball

Fitbit
Inspire 3



SilverSneakers by Tivity Health

Let's Get Started!

What you may gain:

- **Improved balance**
- **Flexibility & strength**
- **Pain management**
- **Emotional wellness**
- **New friendships**

What you will lose:

SilverSneakers Member Experience Center

- **English:** 1-888-423-4632
- **Spanish:** 1-888-617-6392



NCQA: Access & Review of Plan Materials

Manny Felix



How We Share Information With You

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Our goal is to make sure you can easily find, understand, and use information about Health Choice Pathway.

We are required by Medicare and quality standards to:

- Give you clear information about your benefits and cost
- Explain your rights and responsibilities
- Tell you how to file a complaint or appeal
- Keep provider and pharmacy list up to date
- Let you know when important changes happen

We provide information:

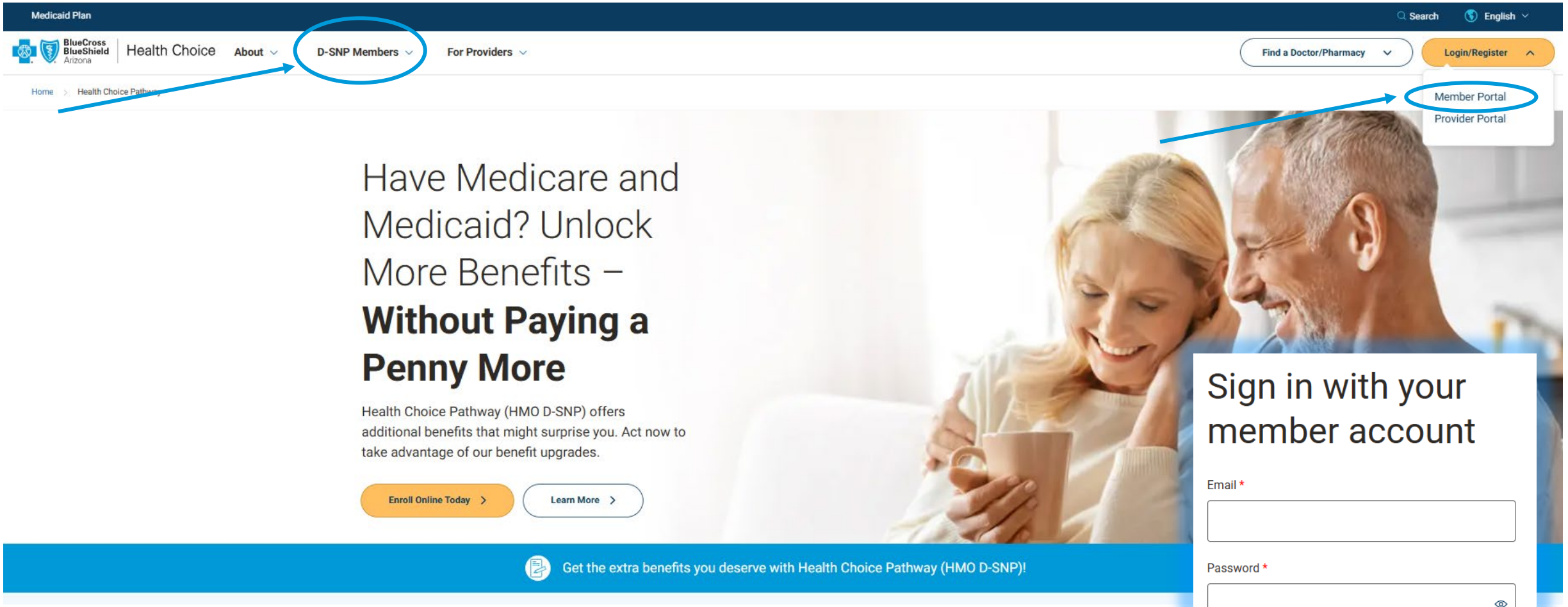
- In your Annual Notice of Change, Evidence of Coverage, and Summary of Benefits
- On our website and member portal
- By mail when required
- By phone through Member Services

Contact Member Services **1-800-656-8991**, TTY **711**
8 a.m. to 8 p.m., 7 days a week.

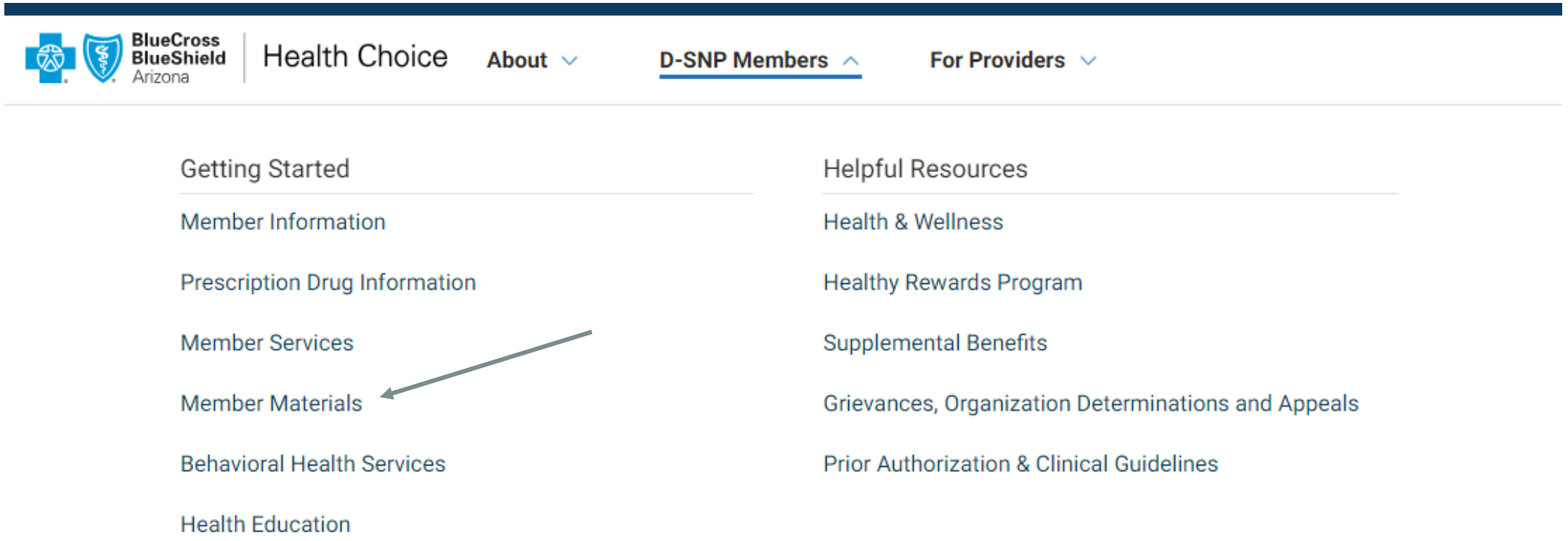
Member Services also has free language interpreter services available for non-English speakers. TTY 711, calls to this number are free. 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., 7 days a week.

Access Plan Materials & Member Portal
azblue.com/hcpathway

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Access Plan Materials



Plan Year Materials

NAME	2026 PLAN YEAR
Annual Mailer	English | Español
Annual Notice of Changes (ANOC)	English | Español
Evidence of Coverage	English | Español
Summary of Benefits	English | Español
Formulary (List of Covered Drugs)	English | Español Search tool: English ↗ | Español ↗
Provider Directory	Primary Care Provider Directory English | Español Specialty Care Provider Directory English | Español Search tool: English | Spanish
Pharmacy Directory	English | Español Search tool: English ↗ | Español ↗
Supplemental Benefits Flyer	English | Español
Over-the-Counter (OTC) Catalog	English | Español
Benefits at a Glance	English | Español
Non-Discrimination Notice and Notice of Availability	English | Español
Star Ratings	English | Español
Disenrollment Form	English | Español

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Call Member Services to:

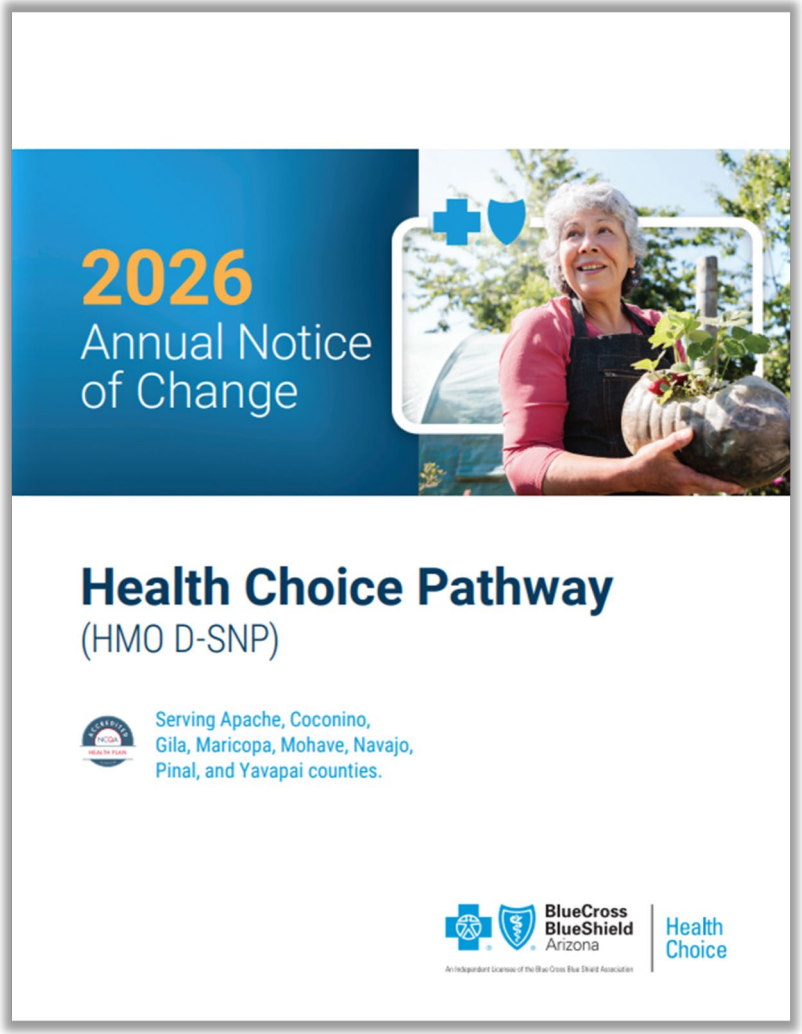
- Request hard-copy materials to be mailed.
- Materials available in other languages and large print.

Annual Notice of Change (ANOC)

Annual Notice of Change (ANOC) is a document that members receive each, typically by end of September. This notice outlines any changes to the plan that will take effect in the following year such as:

- Changes in premiums, copayments, and deductibles
- Updates to the coverage of services and drugs
- Modifications to rules and guidelines for using the plan

The ANOC helps members review upcoming changes so they can decide whether to stay with their current plan or switch during Medicare Open Enrollment Period.



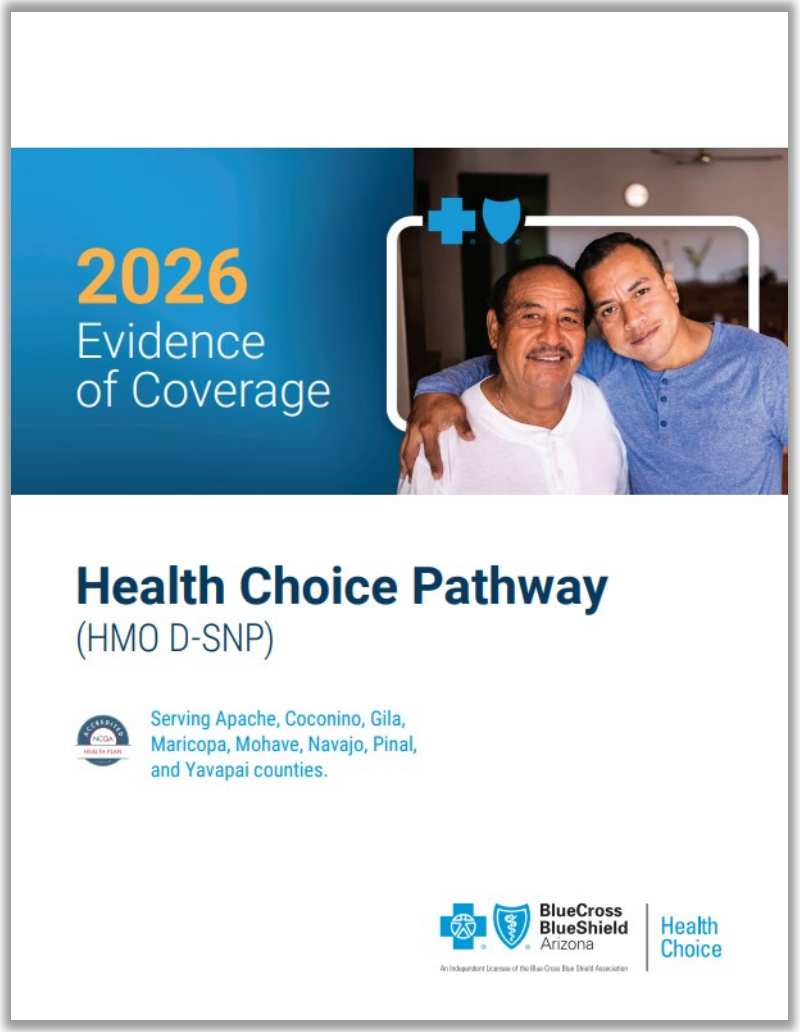
Evidence of Coverage (EOC)

Evidence of Coverage (EOC) – This document serves as a comprehensive guide that explains the specific details of the plans including:

- Coverage and costs
- Rules for using the plan
- Grievance and appeals processes
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Benefit Information

The EOC helps beneficiaries understand how their plan operates and what they can expect in the coming year. While the EOC is no longer automatically mailed, members may request a copy by contacting Member Services at **1-800-656-8991, TTY 711.**

Members can also view the EOC online at our website at **azblue.com/hcpathway.**



Member Access Experience Discussion

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A. Finding Information

- How do you usually access plan information? (mail, website, calling member services)
- Is the website easy to navigate?

B. Understanding Materials

- Are materials easy to read and understand?
- Are benefit explanations clear?
- Is the appeals/grievance process clearly explained?

C. Accessibility

- Have you ever needed materials in another format (large print, translated)?
- Do you feel informed about how to request assistance?

Healthy Rewards – Health Choice Pathway

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Earn $25 for completing:

- **A Medicare Annual Wellness Visit** for all of our members
- **An annual Health Appraisal** when you mail in your completed Appraisal or call us to complete it
- **Breast cancer screenings** every year for women ages 40 – 74
- **Colon cancer screenings** for those ages 45 – 75, a colonoscopy, or opt for a mail-in test that you can do at home
- **Diabetic Eye Exam** for those ages 18 – 75 with diabetes (type 1 and type 2)



Joint Session



Agenda

- AHCCCS Renewal
- Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS): Rating of the Health Plan
- Adressing Social Needs and Social Risks
- Healthy Eating Strategies and Resources: Practical Tips and Local Guidance for Balanced Nutrition



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Renewing AHCCCS Benefits



By: Abel Arizmendi
Consumer Outreach Specialist

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AHCCCS Renewals

- Update your information, address, income, phone numbers, etc.
- Renew with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona Health Choice Application Assisters, HEA online, local DES office
- Have your AHCCCS ID number when renewing





Understanding Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS): Rating of the Health Plan



By: April Zamora & Maria Reyes

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What is CAHPS

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Purpose of CAHPS

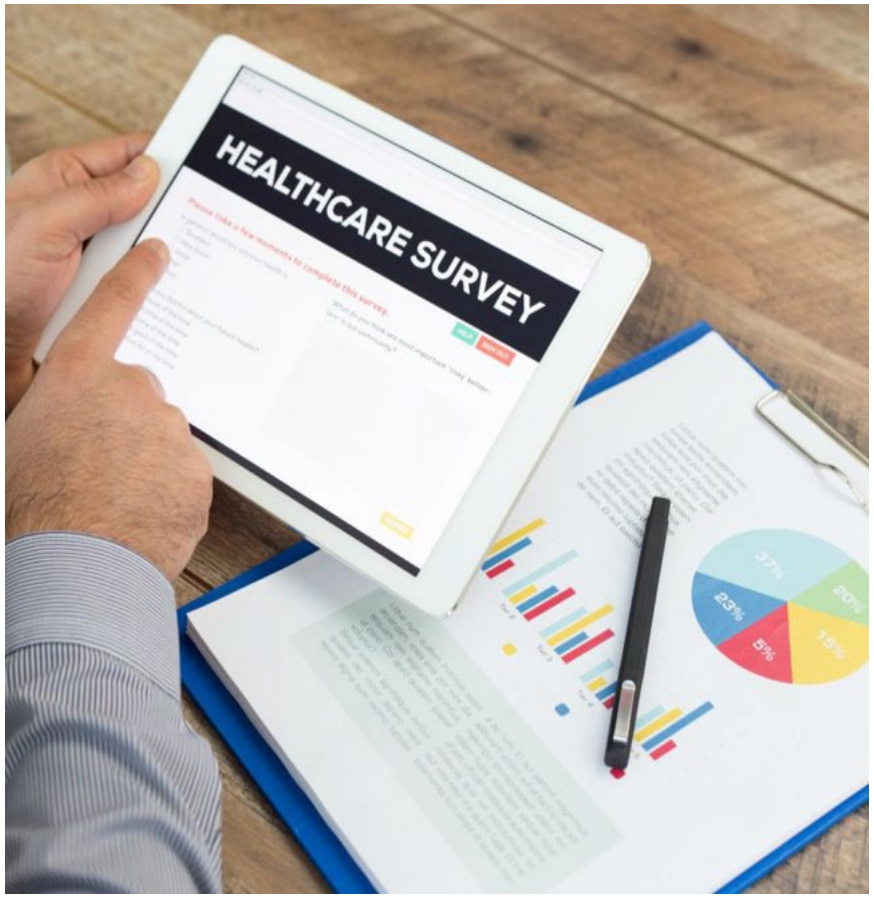
CAHPS collects your feedback to assess healthcare service quality and improve care delivery.

Survey Coverage

Used by Medicare and Medicaid to gather your experience data.

Focus Areas

Questions target your priorities like access to care, doctor communication, and customer service.



CAHPS Survey: Key Categories

Access to Needed Care	Assesses how easily you obtain necessary treatments and specialists for their health needs.
Timeliness of Care	Evaluates how quickly you receive care for illnesses and injuries to ensure prompt treatment.
Doctor Communication Quality	Measures clarity, listening, respect, and time doctors spend communicating with you effectively.
Customer Service Experience	Focuses on the helpfulness and courtesy of support staff in assisting you.
Overall Enrollee Ratings	Includes overall ratings of healthcare you receive from your primary care doctors, specialists, and the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona Health Choice and Health Choice Pathway

Sample Survey

YOUR HEALTH CARE IN THE LAST 6 MONTHS

These questions ask about your own health care from a clinic, emergency room, or doctor's office. This includes care you got in person, by phone, or by video.

3. In the last 6 months, did you have an illness, injury, or condition that needed care right away?
   - O Yes
   - O No → **If No, Go to Question 5**
4. In the last 6 months, when you needed care right away, how often did you get care as soon as you needed?
   - O Never
   - O Sometimes
   - O Usually
   - O Always

YOUR HEALTH PLAN

32. In the last 6 months, did you get information or help from your health plan's customer service?
    - O Yes
    - O No → **If No, Go to Question 35**
33. In the last 6 months, how often did your health plan's customer service give you the information or help you needed?
    - O Never
    - O Sometimes
    - O Usually
    - O Always
34. In the last 6 months, how often did your health plan's customer service staff treat you with courtesy and respect?
    - O Never
    - O Sometimes
    - O Usually
    - O Always

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Why CAHPS Matters

Insight into YOUR Experience	CAHPS provides valuable feedback on your experiences, critical for healthcare quality improvement.
	Surveys reveal delays, poor communication, and customer service problems.
Supports Providers and Plans	Survey results help **US** identify strengths and areas needing improvement in provider services.
Empowers YOU	CAHPS allows **YOU** to voice opinions and influence the quality of **YOUR** care.
Targeted Improvement Actions	Health plans implement changes like new scheduling and staff training.
Informs Policy and Research	Collected data guides policymakers and researchers to improve healthcare systems.

Member Participation & Engagement



Member selection begins:

- **Medicaid:** Random selection starts February 25, 2026
- **Medicare:** Random selection starts March 3, 2026



Survey is mailed, emailed, or conducted by phone



Responses are anonymous and voluntary



Higher participation = more accurate results.





Your voice drives meaningful improvements

CAHPS Questions: Member Feedback

The following questions are going to be asking about your experience in different areas of healthcare on a scale from 1-10. Please feel free to go into detail why you chose your score.

Health Plan Experience.

- How are you feeling about the customer services and overall benefits you get from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona Health Choice?
- How confident are you in your understanding of your benefits and how to use them?

CAHPS Questions: Member Feedback

The following questions are going to be asking about your experience in different areas of healthcare on a scale from 1-10. Please feel free to go into detail why you chose your score.

Communication with Provider(s)

- Do you feel your primary provider listen carefully to you and respect what you have to say?
- Do you feel your specialist listen carefully to you and respect what you have to say?
- Have any of your providers made you feel rushed or dismissed during your visits? Can you share more about that?

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Health Related Social Needs 2026 Goals

Rose Kent



What are health related social needs?

Health-related social needs (HRSN): Social and economic needs that individuals experience that affect their ability to maintain their health and well-being. They put individuals at risk for worse health outcomes and increased health care use. HRSN refers to individual-level factors such as financial instability, lack of access to healthy food, lack of access to affordable and stable housing and utilities, lack of access to health care, and lack of access to transportation.

Definition from Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)

Health Related Social Needs

2026 Food Insecurity Goal

- In 2026, we will continue our work to increase access to food resources and reduce food insecurity.
    - We have developed a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) campaign that will remind members that they can apply for SNAP at the same time that they reapply for AHCCCS.
    - We will host at least four food distribution events.



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Health Related Social Needs

2026 Employment Goal

- In 2026, we are focused on expanding our efforts in member readiness for employment services and job readiness.
    - We have hired a staff member to assist with member education, referrals to vocational services, and support in finding job opportunities.
    - We are improving the ways in which we track members with employment needs.
    - We are creating a guide with information on employment, volunteer, and education resources.



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Health Related Social Needs

2026 Housing Goal

- In 2026, we aim to increase our referrals for members experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity.
    - Added two staff members to complete housing coordination.
    - Create training for all staff regarding housing processes and resources.
    - Strengthen community relationships to support housing referrals.



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Feedback

- Do you have any feedback on the goals we have set?
- How has your experience been with community-based organizations who offer housing, food or employment supports?
- When you have received housing, food or employment resources, what has your experience been?
- Have you encountered any barriers to accessing these kinds of resources?

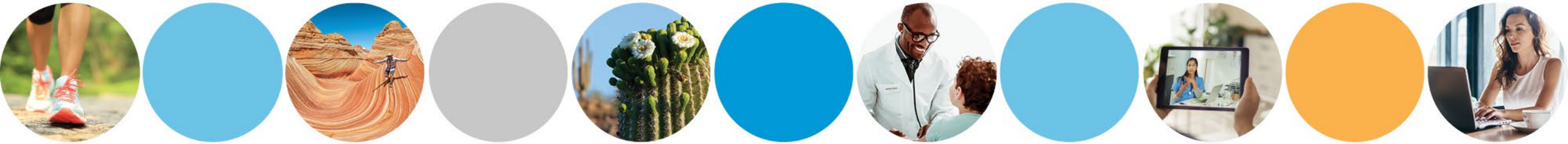


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Healthy Eating Strategies and Resources: Practical Tips and Local Guidance for Balanced Nutrition

FEBRUARY 25, 2026

PRESENTER: JENNIFER DEMARIS, RN



Agenda Highlights for Healthy Eating

- Importance of Healthy Eating
- Healthy Eating Guidelines
- Healthy & Affordable Food Swaps
- Culturally Relevant Healthy Eating
- Smart Shopping and Cooking on a Budget
- Arizona Resources for Healthy Eating



Importance of Healthy Eating



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Improving Well-Being and Managing Chronic Diseases

Benefits of Improved Eating Habits

Improving diet can significantly lower risks for diet related diseases and reduce the need for medications and doctor visits.

When your BMI and weight are at a healthy level, there is less stress on your joints such as back, hips and knees.

It is also places less stress on your heart, lungs and vascular systems. This means conditions such as sleep apnea, congestive heart failure and peripheral artery disease are less likely to occur

Diet and Chronic Disease Control

A diet rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and lean proteins helps control blood sugar and manage weight.

If you have heart failure or kidney disease you need to avoid certain foods. Following a healthy diet doesn't mean you won't have those conditions, but they will be easier to manage.

Once you have a chronic condition, you want to minimize the impact or damage

Managing Diabetes and Hypertension

Proper diet is crucial for managing diabetes and hypertension, reducing complications common in adults and seniors.

Some people develop diabetes because they have a history of being overweight and not eating healthy.

Type 1 diabetics are unable to make insulin. They need daily treatment, but a healthy diet can reduce the amount of medication needed



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Healthy Weight Management and Family Benefits

Fiber-rich Foods for Weight	Fiber-rich, low-calorie foods help you feel full with fewer calories and support healthy weight management.
Nutrient Intake Improvements	Most Americans need more dietary fiber, calcium, vitamin D, and potassium while reducing sugars and saturated fats.
Family Healthy Habits	Healthy eating by parents sets a positive example that improves children's health, behavior, and school performance.
Affordable Nutrition Benefits	Choosing affordable healthy foods stretches budgets and maximizes nutrition assistance, reducing stress for families.

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Healthy Eating Guidelines



Balanced Diet Basics and High-Fiber Foods

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Variety of Nutrient-rich Foods

Enjoy a balanced diet with vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat dairy or alternatives.

Eating a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables (aim for **5 or more servings per day**) provides vitamins, minerals, and fiber that help protect your health.

Try to make **half your plate fruits and vegetables** at each meal.

High-Fiber Whole Foods

Choose whole foods like fresh produce, beans, and whole grains for fiber that supports fullness and steady energy.

High-fiber foods (vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, nuts) help you feel full longer and maintain steady energy and blood sugar levels.

Good examples include apples, bananas, potatoes, beans



Affordable Nutritional Choices

Whole-grain cereals, brown rice, and whole-wheat bread offer better nutrition without added cost compared to refined foods.

Choosing whole-wheat bread or whole-grain cereal instead of white bread or refined cereal adds vitamins and fiber without extra cost.

Dried Beans & Lentils

- **Cost: pennies per serving when bought dry**
- **Nutrition: protein, fiber, iron, folate**
- **Examples: lentils, black beans, pinto beans, chickpeas**

Rice, Oats, and Other Whole Grains

- **Cost: ~$0.08–$0.20 per serving**
- **Nutrition: energy, fiber, B-vitamins**
- **Best options: brown rice, white rice, rolled oats**

Frozen Vegetables

- **Cost: often cheaper than fresh (especially out of season)**
- **Nutrition: comparable to fresh**

Lean Proteins, Reducing Sugar, Healthier Fats, and Sodium

Lean and Plant-Based Proteins	Choose lean protein sources like fish, chicken, beans, lentils, eggs, tofu, and nuts for essential body repair and fiber. Plant proteins like beans and lentils are budget friendly and rich in fiber. A single bag can make many meals.
Reducing Added Sugars	Limit added sugars to under 10% of daily calories by cutting sugary drinks, sodas and desserts; prefer natural fruit sugars. Sweet drinks are the #1 source of added sugar so reducing soda, sweet tea, sports drinks and juices is a good start. Drink water (add lemon, lime or cucumber for flavoring)
Choosing Healthier Fats	Focus on unsaturated fats from fish, nuts, avocados, and vegetable oils while limiting saturated fats from butter and fried foods. When baking, substitute half the butter with unsweetened applesauce or yogurt. If you use dairy products choose low fat or fat free.
Limiting Sodium Intake	Reduce sodium by choosing fresh or low-sodium foods and flavoring meals with herbs and spices instead of salt.

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Hydration and Key Takeaways



Healthiest Drink Choice

Water is the healthiest and cheapest drink that hydrates without adding sugar or calories.



Better Beverage Alternatives

Unsweetened tea, coffee with minimal cream, or sparkling water with fruit juice are healthier drink options than sodas.



Limit Unhealthy Drinks

Avoid sugary drinks, limit alcohol, and stay away from energy drinks due to added calories and health risks.



Nutritious Whole Foods

Filling up on vegetables, fruits, beans, whole grains, lean proteins, and water reduces the urge for less healthy foods.

Healthy & Affordable Food Swaps



Practical Food Substitutions and Comparison Chart

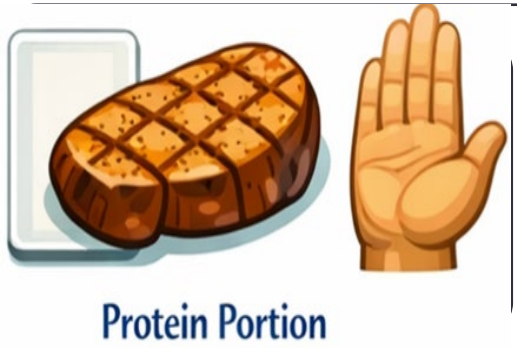
Nutrient-Rich Swaps	Substitutions increase fiber, vitamins, and healthy fats without raising overall food costs significantly.
Simple Cooking Methods	Replacing frying with baking or grilling provides healthier options that are easy to prepare at home.
Balanced and Filling Choices	Healthier options often offer more satiety and support long-term well-being while being budget-friendly.

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EAT THIS, Not That – Healthy and Affordable Food Swaps

Instead of… (Unhealthy/High-Calorie Choice)	Eat/Drink This… (Healthier Low-Cost Alternative)
Sugary drinks – e.g., regular soda, sweet tea, fruit punch, sports drinks	**Water** (plain or infused with lemon/cucumber) **or unsweetened beverages** like iced tea. Cut hundreds of empty calories
Whole milk or cream in cereal and recipes **(high in saturated fat)**	**Low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk** – same calcium and protein with much less fat
Butter, stick margarine, or lard for cooking/baking **(high in saturated/trans fats)**	**Heart-healthy vegetable oil** (canola, olive, corn, etc.) or soft tub margarine. For baking, you can often replace part of the butter with mashed banana or applesauce to cut calories
Fried foods (e.g., deep-fried chicken, French fries) **(high in fat and calories)**	**Baked or grilled** versions – e.g., oven-"fried" chicken (breaded with whole-grain crumbs and baked) or **baked potato/sweet potato** fries instead of deep-fried fries
White bread, flour tortillas, or white rice (refined grains, lower fiber)	**Whole beans** (pinto, black, kidney, etc.) cooked without added solid fats Season with spices, garlic, onion, or a little olive oil. Whole beans are fat-free, high in fiber and protein, and among the most **budget-friendly** foods
Salty snacks like potato chips, Cheetos, pork rinds **(high sodium, low nutrition)**	**Healthy snacks**: Try air-popped or **lightly seasoned popcorn**. Or choose **lower-sodium pretzels** or baked chips. For a more filling snack, have a **handful of peanuts or almonds**, or crunchy **carrot and celery sticks with hummus**
Cookies, pastries, candy, ice cream (lots of sugar and fat)	**Naturally sweet treats**: **Fresh fruit** (like apple slices with peanut butter) or a bowl of **fruit salad**. For a dessert, try dark chocolate or a homemade fruit smoothie. Lighter sweets include **low-fat yogurt with fruit, angel food cake topped with berries**
Fast-food meal (e.g., a burger, fries, and a large soda) **(high in calories, fat, sugar)**	**Smarter fast-food choices**: If you're eating out, opt for a **grilled chicken sandwich** (skip the mayo) or a **salad bowl** with lean protein instead of a fried item with fries. Choose water or diet soda instead of regular soda. You'll save money and calories.

Portion Control and Mindful Eating Tips



Importance of Portion Size

- Even healthy foods contain calories, so portion size matters for balanced eating and weight management.
- Meats should be the size of a deck of cards or the palm of your hand
- A serving of a dessert such as ice cream or cake should be no bigger than your fist





Use Smaller Dishware

- Using smaller plates or bowls helps control portion sizes and prevents overeating.
- For snacks, place portions into smaller snack sized baggies
- Use small cups or glasses for juice or soda





Eat Slowly for Fullness

- Eating slowly allows the brain time to recognize fullness, reducing overeating and aiding digestion
- The first three bites of any food will bring the most flavor and pleasure
- Drink a glass of water with your meal



- **Fun Fact: It takes about 20 minutes for your brain to recognize fullness**

Culturally Relevant Healthy Eating



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Healthy Soul Food Adaptations

Baked Crispy Chicken



Oven-baking fried chicken with whole-wheat coating lowers fat while keeping a crunchy texture and rich flavor.

Healthier Seasoned Greens



Season collard greens with smoked turkey or olive oil and herbs to reduce saturated fat but retain smoky flavor.

Flavorful Bean Alternatives



Replace salt pork in beans with onions, garlic, or smoked paprika for natural flavor without excess fat.

Whole Grain Breads



Use whole grain cornmeal or flour and low-fat dairy in breads to reduce calories and keep traditional taste.

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Healthy Latin American Cuisine Tips

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Use of Corn Tortillas

- Corn tortillas are whole-grain, high in fiber, and a healthier alternative to flour tortillas or fried shells.

Reducing Saturated Fats

- Replace lard with vegetable oil and season with herbs and spices to reduce saturated fat and salt in traditional recipes.

Balanced Plates with Vegetables

- Incorporate grilled vegetables or salads alongside lean proteins and fiber-rich beans for a nutritious, balanced meal.

Healthy Recipe Adaptations

- Use baking instead of frying and add extra veggies to traditional recipes like taquitos and arroz con pollo for health benefits. For a family favorite like posole or menudo, load up the bowl with extra hominy, beans, and veggies, and use lean protein portions.

- The USDA's MyPlate website offers culturally inspired, low-cost healthy recipes like Arroz con Pollo, Black Bean & Sweet Potato Quesadillas and Avocado Black Bean Taquitos

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Healthier American Comfort Foods and Breakfast

Healthier Fast-Food Choices

Choose lean meat, small portions, whole-grain buns

McDonald's – Egg McMuffin (breakfast): 310 calories, **17 g protein**, **2 g fiber**, 770 mg sodium. Lean Canadian bacon egg sandwich on an English muffin and provides protein without a lot of calories

Subway – 6" Oven-Roasted Turkey Sub (wheat bread, lots of veggies, no mayo): ~270 calories, **21 g protein**, **5 g fiber**, 820 mg sodium. Lean turkey and whole-grain bread provide protein and fiber.

Taco Bell – Chicken Soft Taco "Fresco Style": ~150–180 calories, **9–10 g protein**, **3 g fiber**, 400–500 mg sodium. Ordering **"fresco style"** replaces cheese and creamy sauce with fresh salsa, cutting calories and fat.

KFC – Kentucky Grilled Chicken (with corn on the side): ~210 calories, **38 g protein**, 0 g carbs, 710 mg sodium for a grilled chicken breast.

If you're at **Popeyes**, try their flavorful **Blackened Chicken (unbreaded) tenders** or red beans & rice side instead of fried options

Lightened Home Cooking

Use more vegetables and low-fat dairy (add in cottage cheese or Greek yogurt) in casseroles and stews to reduce fat and enhance nutrition.

Meal Prep – make a week's worth of healthy, nutritious meals at a time so you can grab, go or reheat something healthy

Use food swaps for lower calorie, fat or sugar options

Trying foods from other cultures introduces new spices, whole grains, and produce to keep eating exciting and diverse.

Nutritious Breakfasts

Favor fiber-rich cereals, whole-grain toast, and fruit toppings instead of sugary or refined carb-heavy options.

Eggs are a great source of inexpensive and easy protein

Egg bite cups – scramble eggs, peppers, onion and chopped ham into a minimuffin pan for quick grab and go but healthy breakfast

Overnight oats topped with fruit can be a quick and nutritious grab and go breakfast

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Smart Shopping and Cooking on a Budget



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Meal Planning and Building Meals Around Healthy Staples

Plan Meals and Shopping List

Planning meals weekly and making a shopping list helps avoid impulse buys and ensures healthy ingredients.

Use WIC, Food stamps and Double Up Bucks to stretch your grocery budget. Build meals around these staples.

Do “theme” nights such as pasta night or no meat night

Check the grocery store sales before you go. Use these items to plan meals

Focus on Budget-Friendly Staples

Build meals around affordable, nutritious staples like eggs, beans, lentils, brown rice, oats, and frozen vegetables.

Meals such as rice and beans, beef stew and chicken casserole combine a low-cost protein with vegetables or a carb to stretch the meal

Shop in volume or at low-cost places like Sam’s, Costco, Winco, Aldi’s and American Grocery

Cook Once, Eat Multiple Times

Prepare larger portions like roasted chicken or grains to save time and money by eating leftovers creatively.

Using a slow cooker, crock pot or insta pot can make larger meals

Roast a whole chicken (often on sale for ~$0.99/lb), enjoy it as a roast dinner, then use leftover chicken in a soup with beans and veggies the next day, and in tacos or a casserole for another meal. This saves money and time.

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Using Frozen/Canned Produce and Shopping Smart

Benefits of Frozen and Canned Produce	Frozen and canned produce retain nutrients and are often more affordable and longer-lasting than fresh options.
Choosing Healthy Canned Options	Select canned fruits in 100% juice and low-sodium or no-salt-added vegetables to maintain health benefits.
Smart Shopping Strategies	Compare unit prices, buy in bulk, use coupons, and prefer in-season and local produce for cost savings.
Affordable Local Produce Sources	Farmers' markets and ethnic grocery stores offer affordable fresh produce, sometimes with nutrition assistance programs.

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Family Involvement, Kitchen Hacks, and Reducing Convenience Foods

Family Cooking Participation

Involving kids in meal prep encourages healthy eating and makes cooking a fun family bonding activity.

Family cooking nights can be a way to share cultural recipes and teach healthy habits across generations.

Budget-Friendly Kitchen Hacks

Use slow cookers and leftover ingredients to create nutritious, cost-effective meals that stretch food budgets.

Bulk up meat dishes with beans or vegetables to make them go further – for example, mix cooked lentils or chopped mushrooms into ground beef for tacos, meatloaf, or spaghetti sauce (no one will notice, and you'll stretch your meal while cutting fat and adding nutrients).

Reducing Convenience Foods

Choosing whole foods over processed snacks saves money and improves nutritional quality in daily diets.

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Arizona Resources for Healthy Eating



SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks

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Purpose of SNAP

SNAP helps eligible individuals and families afford groceries by providing benefits loaded onto an EBT card.

Many schools offer free meals to children whose family receive SNAP benefits

During summer months there are programs which allow families (sometimes communities) to get free meals. These are located on the state and local county webpages

Double Up Food Bucks Program

This program doubles SNAP dollars when buying fresh fruits and vegetables at participating markets and stores.

Some Farmer's Markets also will participate. The food is fresher

Application and Eligibility

Applying for SNAP in Arizona can be done online or at the DES office

Income limits are higher for families with children, seniors, and disabled people.

WIC Program and Food Bank Network

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WIC Nutrition Assistance

- WIC supports pregnant women, infants, and young children under 5 with nutritious foods and education during crucial growth stages.

WIC Farmers Market Program

- WIC vouchers are accepted at grocery stores and farmers markets, providing fresh produce through special coupon programs.

Arizona Food Bank Network

- Local food banks help families with free staple foods and fresh produce, easing food budget challenges in Arizona.

Additional Food Bank Services

- Many food banks offer nutrition classes and gardening workshops to promote healthy living and self-sufficiency.

Local Produce Programs and Nutrition Classes

Community Produce Programs

Programs like Market on the Move and P.O.W.W.O.W. distribute affordable fresh produce to reduce food waste and save money.

Local food pantries often receive local produce and products. Check requirements as each place may vary

Events like health fairs provide free produce and health education resources to the public.

Nutrition and Cooking Education

Free or low-cost classes teach healthy meal planning, budget shopping, and cooking skills through local organizations.

If you are prediabetic or diabetic there may be education and classes available to you through your health plan

Community centers and churches offer nutrition and wellness programs tailored to local needs.

Online Nutrition Resources

Websites like EatFresh.org and organizations offer accessible online nutrition and cooking courses promoting healthy eating.

Online there are many resources/sites which will offer suggestions on how to eat well on less

Use AI to ask what can be made with ingredients in your home.

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Conclusion



Importance of Healthy Eating

- Healthy eating is vital for overall well-being and helps prevent chronic diseases effectively.



Cultural and Affordable Choices

- Incorporating cultural preferences and affordable food options makes healthy eating sustainable for all.



Utilizing Local Resources

- Using local and seasonal foods supports nutrition and empowers families to maintain healthy lifestyles.



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