



Policy Brief

Medi-Cal Managed Care: 2023 Performance in Post Emergency Department Follow-up Care for Medi-Cal Beneficiaries with Substance Use

July 2025

Executive Summary

The Medi-Cal managed care plans show little progress in improving the rate at which individuals receive follow up care after visiting an emergency room for substance use disorder. The average score on the HEDIS FUA measure for 30-day follow-up was 29 percent in 2023 compared with 30 percent in 2022. In addition, the California average of 29 percent was significantly less than the 35 percent which was the national average score for all Medicaid plans in 2023. Only 15 of the 55 managed care plans in California (27 percent) had scores the were higher than the median score of all Medicaid plans.

Findings

The Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) is a widely used set of performance measures in the managed care industry, developed and maintained by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). The California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) tracks and publishes HEDIS scores of all Medi-Cal managed care plans (MCPs)

One of the measures tracked by the department assesses the each plan's effectiveness in arranging follow-up from emergency visits for individuals presenting with substance use problems. Follow-up After Emergency Department Visit for Substance Use (FUA) measures the percentage of emergency department visits for MCP members 13 years of age or older with a principal diagnosis of substance use disorder or any diagnosis of a drug overdose who had a follow up visit within 7 or 30 days following an ED visit. The results for this measure are published in the Managed Care External Quality Review Technical Report – "Medi-Cal Managed Care Physical Health External Quality Review Technical Report," Contract Year 2023–24, "Comparative Managed Care Health Plan-Specific Measurement Year 2023 Performance Measure Results," April 2025.

What was California's performance in 2023?

The following table presents the performance in 2022 and 2023 of Medi-Cal managed care plans on the two measures of follow-up care for individuals with substance use diagnoses. It shows summary statistics across the various plans, including the highest score, the lowest score, and the statewide average. For comparison, the table also indicates the average scores for all Medicaid plans in the nation during the 2023 measure year.

Table 1

California's Performance on HEDIS Measures FUA-7 and FUA-30 Indicating the Likelihood of Follow-up After an Emergency Room Visit for Substance Use¹

Follow-Up After Emergency Room Visit	Measure Year	Highest Performance Level	Lowest Performance Level	Statewide Average	National Average for Medicaid Plans ²
Within 7 days	2023	35%	9%	20%	24%
	2022	36%	10%	20%	
Within 30 Days	2023	49%	15%	29%	35%
	2022	53%	16%	30%	

Managed care plans in California are performing below the national average on these measures. The follow-up at both the 7-day and the 30-day mark shows results below the national average by 4 or 5 percentage points. Furthermore, 2023 performance declined on average for the 30-day measure and was unchanged for the 7-day measure.

How does the performance of individual California plans compare with Medicaid plans in other states in 2022?

The following table presents the performance of California plans on both the 7-day and the 30-day follow-up measures. The color fill in each cell indicates where the California plan's score falls across the quartiles of the national distribution of Medicaid plan performance.

¹The source for the health plan scores in California is the Department of Health Care Services quality reports. The average scores for plans nationally and the percentiles used in Table 2 come from NCQA and its Quality Compass® [2023]. It is used with the permission of the National Committee for Quality Assurance ("NCQA"). Please refer to the note below regarding use of these data and their use.

² The average reported here is for all age groups, while the measures for California are for the 13 and over population. Given the small number of 12 and under individuals seeking ER care for substance use, the two numbers should be comparable.

Pink indicates the plan's score is below the 25th percentile nationally; orange indicates a score between the 25th and 50th percentile nationally; yellow indicates between the 50th and 75th percentile; and green indicates that the plan score is above the 75th percentile nationally. In 2023 only two plans in California scored that above the 75th percentile of national plans.

Table 2

**2023 Performance on the FUA-30 HEDIS Measure by California Medi-Cal
Managed Care Plans³**

Percentile ranking relative to benchmarks for all Medicaid plans nationally

	Over 75th	75 th - 50 th	50 th - 25 th	Below 25 th	
County/Region	Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan		7 Day FUA	30 Day FUA	
San Mateo	Health Plan of San Mateo		35%	49%	
San Diego	Kaiser SoCal (KP Cal, LLC)		33%	47%	
San Luis Obispo	CenCal Health		30%	41%	
KP North ⁵	Kaiser NorCal (KP Cal, LLC)		30%	39%	
Imperial	Molina Healthcare of California		31%	39%	
Region 2 ²	California Health & Wellness Plan		27%	39%	
Alameda	Alameda Alliance for Health		27%	39%	
Northeast ³	Partnership HealthPlan of California		29%	39%	
Riverside/San Bernardino	Inland Empire Health Plan		25%	38%	
Imperial County	California Health & Wellness Plan		28%	37%	
Region 2 ²	Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan		25%	36%	
Santa Barbara	CenCal Health		25%	36%	
Monterey/Santa Cruz	Central California Alliance for Health		25%	36%	
San Diego	Molina Healthcare of California		21%	34%	
San Benito	Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan		19%	34%	
Northwest ⁴	Partnership HealthPlan of California		24%	32%	
Contra Costa	Contra Costa Health Plan		20%	32%	

³ The superscript numbers identify the counties as follows:

1. Region 1 consists of Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Plumas, Sierra, Sutter, and Tehama counties
2. Region 2 consists of Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Inyo, Mariposa, Mono, Nevada, Placer, Tuolumne, and Yuba counties
3. Northeast consists of Lassen, Modoc, Shasta, Siskiyou, and Trinity counties
4. Northwest consists of Del Norte and Humboldt counties
5. KP North consists of Sacramento, Amador, El Dorado, and Placer counties
6. Southeast consists of Napa, Solano, and Yolo counties
7. Southwest consists of Lake, Marin, Mendocino, and Sonoma counties

Sacramento	Molina Healthcare of California	19%	32%
Region 1¹	California Health & Wellness Plan	25%	32%
Region 1¹	Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan	23%	32%
Santa Clara	Santa Clara Family Health Plan	19%	32%
Sacramento	Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan	22%	31%
San Diego	Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan	21%	31%
San Diego	Aetna Better Health of California	21%	30%
Southwest⁷	Partnership HealthPlan of California	20%	30%
Southeast⁶	Partnership HealthPlan of California	21%	30%
San Diego	Community Health Group Partnership Plan	19%	29%
Contra Costa	Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan	18%	29%
Riverside/San Bernardino	Molina Healthcare of California	17%	29%
Sacramento	Health Net Community Solutions, Inc.	20%	29%
Alameda	Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan	17%	28%
Los Angeles	L.A. Care Health Plan	18%	28%
Ventura	Gold Coast Health Plan	17%	28%
Sacramento	Aetna Better Health of California	21%	28%
Stanislaus	Health Net Community Solutions, Inc.	18%	27%
Kings	Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan	16%	27%
San Francisco	Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan	13%	26%
Tulare	Health Net Community Solutions, Inc.	17%	25%
San Diego	Health Net Community Solutions, Inc.	18%	25%
Kern	Health Net Community Solutions, Inc.	16%	24%
Tulare	Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan	16%	24%
Stanislaus	Health Plan of San Joaquin	15%	24%
Santa Clara	Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan	13%	23%
San Francisco	San Francisco Health Plan	12%	22%
Kings	CalViva Health	17%	22%
Orange	CalOptima	11%	21%
Los Angeles	Health Net Community Solutions, Inc.	13%	21%
Merced	Central California Alliance for Health	12%	20%
San Joaquin	Health Net Community Solutions, Inc.	13%	20%
Madera	Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan	13%	19%
Kern	Kern Family Health Care	11%	19%
San Joaquin	Health Plan of San Joaquin	12%	17%
Madera	CalViva Health	N/A	17%
Fresno	Anthem Blue Cross Partnership Plan	10%	17%
Fresno	CalViva Health	9%	15%

Has performance changed between 2022 and 2023?

Charts 1 and 2 show the performance for individual plans on the 30-day measure for 2022 and 2023. While the average performance on the 30-day HEDIS measure in California has changed little between 2022 and 2023 -- the average actually declined by one percentage point (see Table 1). However, performance on some individual plans has changed significantly. Nineteen plans out of the 55 showed improved performance between 2022 and 2023. Often the lowest-performing plans showed poorer performance in 2023 compared to the year before. Some counties, e.g. Kings and Tulare, show marked reductions in performance in all the plans operating in the county.

Chart 1
Follow-Up After Emergency Department Visit
for Substance Use - 30 Days
Medi-Cal - 2022 and 2023 - Part 1

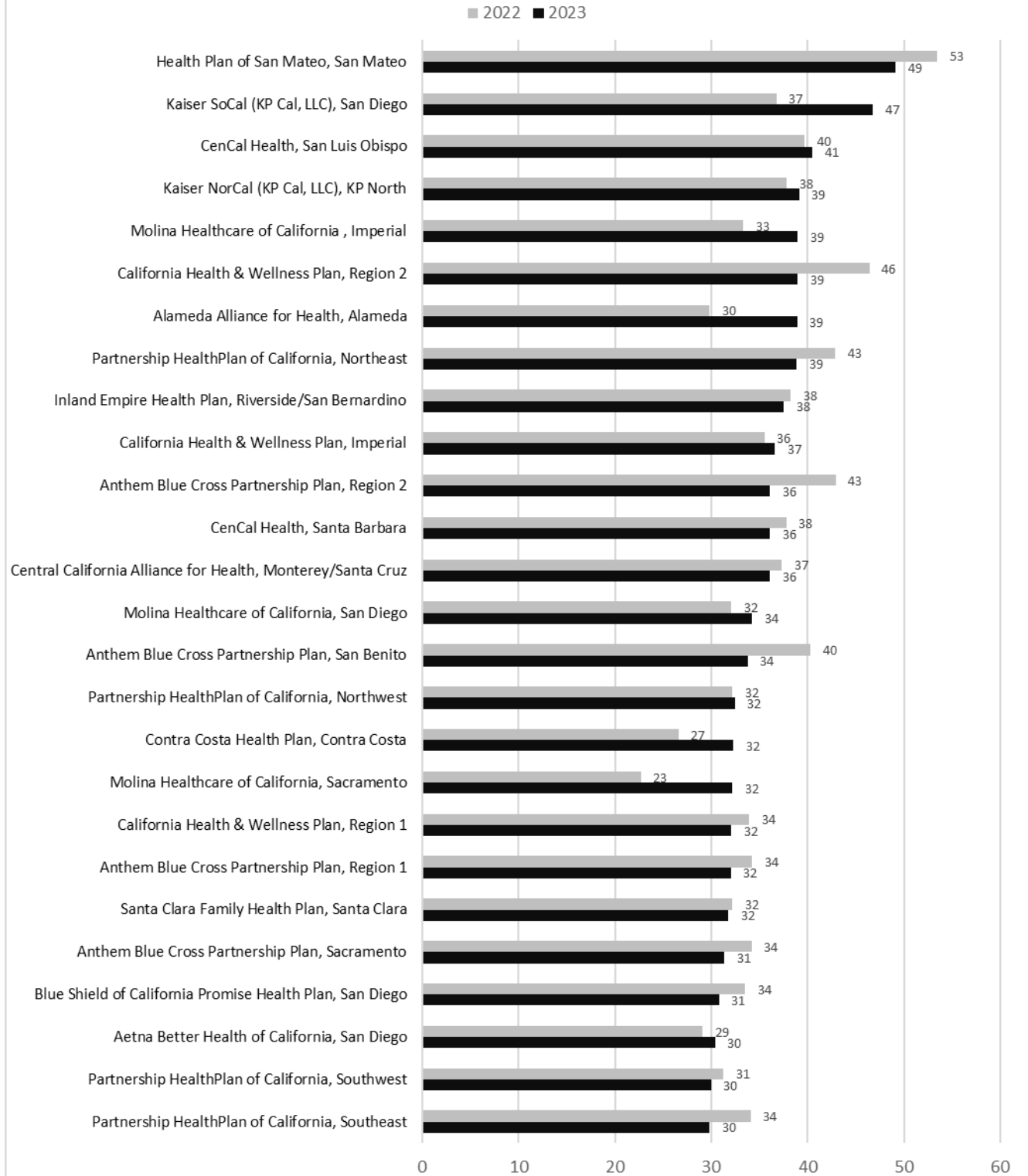
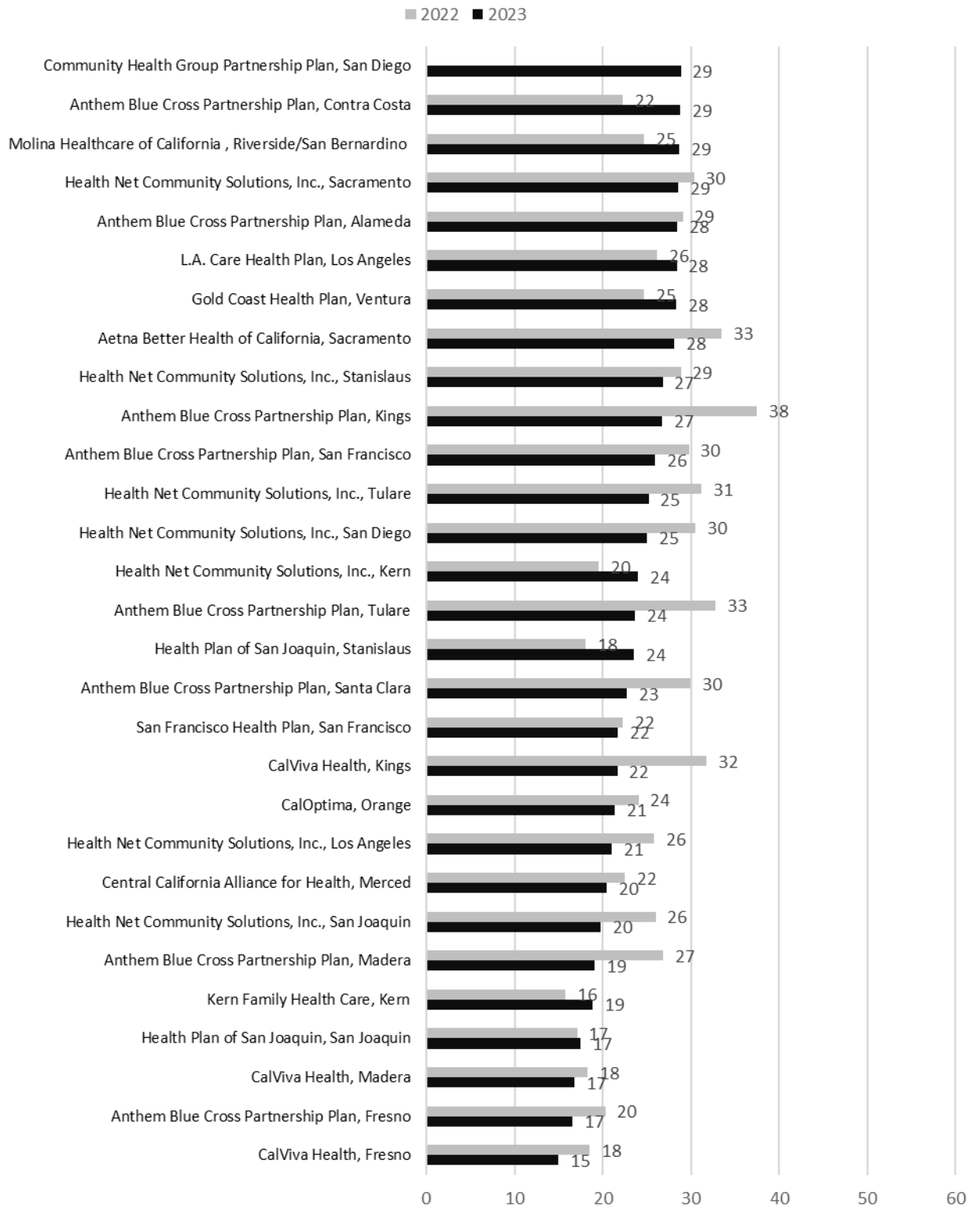


Chart 2
Follow-Up After Emergency Department Visit
for Substance Use - 30 Days
Medi-Cal - 2022 and 2023 - Part 2



ENDNOTE:

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About the Author

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About California Health Policy Strategies (CalHPS), L.L.C.

- CalHPS is a mission-driven health policy consulting group based in Sacramento. For more information, visit www.calhps.com.
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