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Overview

Starting Jan. 1, 2024, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network will offer a Cancer Support program, Iris by OncoHealth®, for adult members (ages 18 and older) who have a cancer diagnosis or who are cancer survivors. The program is available to commercial members who live in Michigan and in other states; see “Which members have access to the program?” below for more information.

With permission from the member, the program will also be available to the member’s caregivers.

The program will:

- Help members navigate the emotional, physical and financial challenges caused by a cancer diagnosis and treatment.
- Provide supplemental support and education between regularly scheduled, in-person appointments.

The program also aims to lower the burden on health care providers and complement — not replace or interfere with — the care they provide.

Note: All Iris staff that require licensure are licensed in all 50 states.

Which members have access to the program?

The Cancer Support program through Iris will be available to members who have coverage through:

- Blue Cross and BCN commercial fully insured groups
- Commercial plans for individuals
- Self-funded commercial groups that purchase the program

To determine whether they have access to the program, members can call the number on the back of their ID card.

Is there a cost to members for this program?

There will be no copays or additional out-of-pocket costs to eligible members.

What's included in the program?

Through either the Iris mobile app or website or by phone, the program will include access to:

- **24/7 support from oncology nurses** — Members can discuss symptoms and side effects with U.S.-based oncology nurses. The Iris nurses report new or worsening symptoms to the member's primary oncology team by fax or phone, as clinically appropriate. For more information, see "How do the Iris nurses discuss symptoms and side effects with members?" on Page 5.
- **Oncology-specific mental health support** — Members can select a therapist and schedule virtual care appointments with licensed mental health professionals. The Iris therapists offer members support for cancer-specific concerns. Members are often able to meet with a therapist within 24 to 48 hours of scheduling an appointment. For more information, see "What type of mental health support does Iris offer?" on Page 5.
- **Registered dietitian nutritionists with cancer expertise** — The Iris dietitians offer personalized support to address high-impact nutritional symptoms and provide diagnosis-specific guidance related to food and nutrition. Through the Iris platform, members can message a dietitian directly and schedule one-on-one meetings with a dietitian. Phone-based support is also available.
- **Peer mentors** — A trained team of cancer patients, caregivers and survivors are available to support and advise members based on their own experiences navigating

a cancer diagnosis. For more information, see “What is the role of Iris peer mentors?” on Page 6.

- **Customized educational information** — This includes a library of clinically approved videos, articles and other self-guided content curated for each member. For more information, see “What type of educational information is available?” on Page 6.
- **A symptom tracker** — Members can report symptoms and side effects through the tracker, which is available through the Iris mobile app or website. Iris nurses remotely monitor the information members enter, which enables them to intervene early when necessary.
- **Advance care planning assistance** — Members and their caregivers can meet with Iris team members about care planning and receive support for completing documents. Advance care planning is offered by the Iris care team at relevant and appropriate points.
- **Navigation to financial and community resources** — In addition to identifying concerns during interactions with members, the Cancer Support program uses a proactive screening tool to identify social determinants of health and financial needs. The Iris care team uses this information to connect members with appropriate local or national resources to help reduce barriers to care.
- **Interpreters** — If English isn’t the member’s first language, interpreters are available.

What if my practice or health system already offers care navigation services to our patients?

The Cancer Support program is part of members’ benefits. Members can choose not to participate in the program, to use all features of the program or to use only those features that relate to needs that can’t be met — or can’t be met quickly — through their primary oncologist.

Here are some examples of how a member can take advantage of specific features of the program:

- If there’s a long wait to meet with a social worker or dietitian through their provider office’s care navigation program, the member can schedule an appointment through Iris and get the help they need sooner.
- If a member needs help navigating the financial aspects of their diagnosis and treatment, Iris can connect them with financial and community resources.

- If a member has concerns about what to expect during treatment or about side effects, the Iris team provides another resource for addressing those concerns — which is especially important if the member is unable to reach their oncologist. Members can reach out to the Iris nursing team online or by phone anytime of the day or night. The Iris team will work in close collaboration with the member's primary oncology team to communicate any new or worsening symptoms.

How does Iris get access to a member's medical records?

The Iris team asks new patients if they want to consent to share their medical records to improve quality of care and care coordination. Members can share their medical records by doing one of the following:

- Sharing their records directly with Iris
- Requesting that Iris work with their health care provider to obtain the relevant medical records. In this case, Iris sends a state-specific Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, or HIPAA, medical record release form to the member electronically. Once Iris receives the signed form, the Iris operations manager securely faxes the form and a cover sheet to the provider's office. If Iris doesn't receive records within seven days, the operations manager will follow up with the provider's office.

Iris requests updated medical records on an as-needed basis, based on relevant clinical changes.

How does the Iris team coordinate care with the member's primary care team?

While the member's primary oncologist leads the member's treatment plan, the Iris clinicians deliver supportive care by helping members address the physical and psychosocial symptoms associated with cancer and its treatments. Through this team-based approach, members have the potential to achieve the best possible outcomes.

The Iris nurses report new or worsening symptoms to the member's primary oncology team by fax or phone, as clinically appropriate. In addition, the Iris team will interact with members' primary oncology providers to support high-quality, coordinated care by all care team members.

If the member's ongoing medical management is being handled by their primary care provider, Iris will communicate with the both the primary oncologist and the primary care provider, as appropriate.

The Iris nursing team is supported by board-certified medical oncologists and advanced practice providers who are available for escalation when patient questions or problems are beyond the scope of the Iris nurses.

How do the Iris nurses discuss symptoms and side effects with members?

Through the Iris platform, members can:

- Discuss symptoms and side effects with Iris' oncology nurses. (The Iris team doesn't prescribe or modify medications.)
- Report symptoms and side effects through the tracker. Iris nurses remotely monitor this information, which enables them to intervene early when necessary.

The Iris nurses use OncoHealth's symptom management pathways to assess, triage and manage patient-reported symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, distress, constipation, diarrhea, mucositis and fever. The pathways are based on standards of care established by the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, the American Society of Clinical Oncology and the Oncology Nursing Society, adapted for use in virtual care.

Note: These pathways include management with clinically appropriate over-the-counter medications. Iris clinicians will collaborate with treating oncologists when members develop new or worsening symptoms and may require prescription medications for symptom management.

The Iris nursing team is supported by board-certified medical oncologists and advanced practice providers who are available for case escalation. The Iris nurses report new or worsening symptoms to the member's primary oncology team by:

- Fax — For all member interactions
- Phone — For issues that need immediate attention

What type of mental health support does Iris offer?

The Iris team of licensed oncology-specialized mental health therapists can address the psychosocial challenges that affect many cancer patients, such as:

- Adjusting to illness
- Coping with anxiety, depression and uncertainty
- Communicating with their care teams

- Talking to their families and employers about their diagnoses
- Fear of cancer recurrence

The Iris therapists are available by appointment, and visits are conducted through the Iris mobile app or website or by phone so the member doesn't have to leave their home. There are no limits on the number of visits.

What is the role of Iris peer mentors?

Through the Iris peer mentor community, members can connect with people who share similar gender, age, and cancer diagnoses and treatments. By working with a peer mentor coach, members can get practical advice and encouragement from someone who has been in a similar situation. Conversations with peer mentor coaches can take place asynchronously or during live sessions.

In addition, a peer mentor can help members better understand the benefits and value of the Iris program.

What type of educational information is available?

The Iris content library contains clinically approved patient-facing, self-serve articles, pre-recorded virtual events and videos across the following categories: tips for side effects, diagnosis and treatment, everyday support, nutrition, navigating emotions, family and community. The content engages readers in oncology-specific topics and offers education, support, strategies and additional resources.

To supplement this content, OncoHealth has partnered with the Mayo Clinic to integrate over 300 oncology-specific pieces of multi-media content, including video content and written content. The Iris clinicians will often deliver suggested educational material to members through the Iris mobile app or website.

How can providers learn more about this program?

To learn more, go to [IrisOncology.com](https://irisoncology.com).*

Providers who want to collaborate with OncoHealth care teams regarding members' clinical care should do one of the following:

- Email iriscareteam@irisoncology.com
- Call 470-970-4747 — Iris staff is available at this number 24/7.



Nonprofit corporations and independent licensees
of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

Cancer Support program

Frequently asked questions for providers

For Blue Cross commercial and BCN commercial

November 2023

OncoHealth is an independent company supporting Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network by providing cancer support services.

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