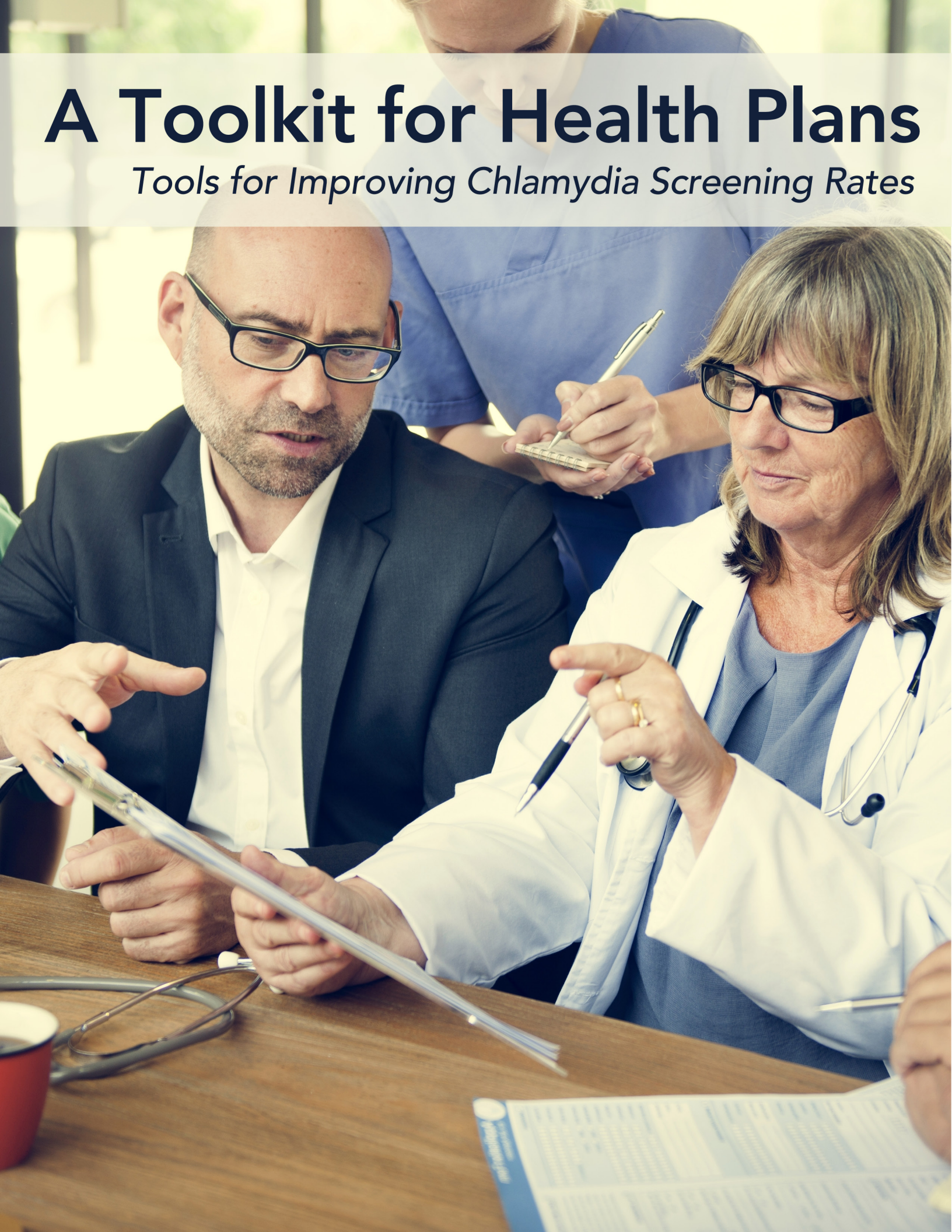


A Toolkit for Health Plans

Tools for Improving Chlamydia Screening Rates



Introduction

Since 1994, when chlamydia became a nationally notifiable condition, it has accounted for the largest proportion of all sexually transmitted infections (STIs) reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The most recent Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance Report, released by the CDC in October 2016, revealed that 1,526,658 cases of chlamydia were reported in 2015—the highest number of annual cases of any condition ever reported to CDC. Estimated incidence of chlamydia is even higher, as the majority of chlamydia infections are asymptomatic and thus many go undiagnosed.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends screening for chlamydia in sexually active women age 24 years and younger and in older women who are at increased risk for infection, a recommendation reflected in the guidelines of the CDC and professional societies including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG).

The HEDIS (Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set) measure for chlamydia offers evidence of missed opportunities to screen women at risk. HEDIS is a tool from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) used by more than 90 percent of U.S. health plans to measure performance on important dimensions of care and services. The most recent HEDIS data show that fewer than 50 percent of eligible women aged 15-24 were screened for chlamydia.

In response to these results the American Sexual Health Association (ASHA) has created this toolkit to help insurance companies drive STI screening compliance with a strong focus on chlamydia. Implementation of such programming has the potential to ultimately increase HEDIS scores, improve patient outcomes and reduce the cost of health related consequences from an infection.

To increase screening compliance and to reduce the prevalence of chlamydia, all parties involved—including providers, patients and parents—need additional education. In addition to education, consideration for revised “opt-out” messaging should be implemented. The resources in the toolkit can be customized for your individual plan. Included are:

- A letter to healthcare providers from your health plan, outlining the importance of chlamydia screening in young women
- Sample opt-out messaging on chlamydia screening to display or distribute to patients
- Educational materials for patients and parents outlining the health consequences of undiagnosed chlamydia infection and the need for screening

The resources in the toolkit are available for download as individual printable documents. Most are editable and customizable to your plan. We hope that you, along with your members and providers, will find this information helpful.



Efforts by Health Plans to Improve Screening Rates

Many health plans have devised and implemented programs designed to drive compliance with chlamydia screening recommendations. Below are a sampling of ideas that can be implemented by your plan. The ideas presented here, as well as others in this toolkit, can be initiated throughout the year. These can also supplement your efforts during national awareness observances tied to sexual health, including *STI Awareness Month* (April), *Women's Health Week* (May) and *Sexual Health Awareness Month* (September).

Provider-focused

- **Opt-out messaging:** “Opt-out” testing is similar to universal screening, encouraging providers set a practice protocol to screen all sexually active women ages 15-24 per USPSTF guidelines, instead of asking patients in the targeted group to “opt in” to testing.
- **Newsletters:** Distributed to providers from the plan highlighting the importance of STI screenings and target goals for chlamydia screening rates.
- **Letters from medical directors:** Detailing the provider’s screening rate, description of USPSTF screening guidelines, and suggestions for ways to improve screening.
- **Development of a preventive health flow sheet:** Explaining covered preventive services—including chlamydia screenings—as a best practice activity.
- **Physician profiles:** A list of clinical measures with provider performance relative to peer performance.
- **Medical director and provider meetings:** In-person peer-to-peer meetings to discuss the providers screening rates and strategies for improvement.
- **Pay for performance:** Financial incentives from the plan to providers that are increasing screening rates or meeting set goals.

Patient-focused

- **Patient mailers:** Letters, annual preventive services magazine, newsletters, and/or brochures sent to patients with screening reminders and information on STIs.
- **Financial incentives:** Patients receive a gift card (ex. Visa, Starbucks, Target) from the plan for completing an annual chlamydia screening.
- **Automated phone calls/text messages/email:** Clinical reminders for STI screenings.
- **Patient privacy information:** Patients receive detailed information on their privacy rights and programs from your health plan to ensure confidentiality.
- **Social media campaigns:** Patients are targeted with social media campaigns regarding the importance of screening, such as the Yes Means Test campaign to encourage chlamydia and gonorrhea screening (www.yesmeanstest.org).

A photograph of four healthcare professionals in a clinical setting. A woman in a white lab coat and a man in blue scrubs are looking at a tablet held by a man in a white lab coat. Another man in blue scrubs is standing next to him, also looking at the tablet. The background shows a hallway with glass doors and a sign that says "5. 101".

Sample Letters to Providers and Patients

The following page contains sample letters and resources to be sent from the plan to healthcare providers, including optional language around HEDIS scores, an explanation of an “opt-out” approach to chlamydia screening, and a fact sheet on how this approach is cost effective.

Letters in the toolkit are provided as Word documents to be easily editable and customizable with your plan logo and information specific to your plan.

Letters to Providers

These letters from the plan to healthcare providers outline the importance preventive care with specific reference to chlamydia screening. Letter two offers the option of highlighting your plan's ranking on the chlamydia screening HEDIS measure.

Letter to Patients

This letter to patients outlines chlamydia screening recommendations from CDC and highlights the consequences of untreated infection.

Inserts—Supplementary Materials for Providers

The fact sheet on opt-out screening is referenced in the letters to healthcare providers and should be included as a supplement to any mailing. The additional optional fact sheets offer an overview of research on the cost-effectiveness of the opt-out approach to chlamydia screening as well as an overview of CDC screening recommendations.



Plan Tools for Providers and Patients

The following pages contain sample letters that you can offer providers in your plan. One letter addresses the importance of screening directly with patients while a second explains chlamydia screening recommendations to parents. A printable flyer/poster can also be posted or left with patient educational materials in a waiting area.

Plans can direct healthcare providers in their plan to these materials online. Letters are provided as Word docs, customizable to a clinic or practice. The patient brochure can also be customized with a logo or practice information.

Information for Patients and Parents

This letter from providers to patients explains CDC recommendations for annual chlamydia screening for sexually active women under 25 and outlines the practice policy to automatically screen patients in this target range. Providers can send the letter directly to patients or print and post the poster in the waiting area.

This letter explaining chlamydia screening recommendations can be customized and sent to parents of patients in the target age range or posted in the waiting area.

Patient Brochure

This printable tri-fold brochure includes basic information on chlamydia and gonorrhea, outlines the consequences of undetected and untreated infection and CDC screening guidelines. The back panel of the brochure can be customized to include a logo or other information about a practice.