

Meridian Health Plan of Illinois Offers Telehealth for its YouthCare Members through Blueberry Pediatrics - Nov 14, 2024

Youth in the Illinois Department for Children and Family Services' care have 24/7 access to virtual pediatric healthcare and at-home diagnostic devices

CHICAGO, Nov. 14, 2024 /PRNewswire/ -- [Meridian Health Plan of Illinois, Inc.](#) (Meridian), a provider of government-sponsored managed care services to families, children, seniors, and individuals with complex medical needs and a [Centene Corporation](#) company, is announcing the expansion of an innovative program with [Blueberry Pediatrics](#) (Blueberry) to provide fast, virtual, pediatric care for [YouthCare HealthChoice Illinois](#) (YouthCare) members. Meridian manages the care of YouthCare members who are current and former youth in the care of the Illinois Department for Children and Family Services (DCFS) aged birth through 21. Initially started as a pilot program in March 2024, Meridian is now expanding the Blueberry program to all YouthCare members.

After enrollment with the telehealth provider, each member is shipped an at-home medical kit that includes a pulse oximeter, thermometer, and a "smart" otoscope (wi-fi ear scope that sends images and videos back to the physician). With these tools, Blueberry pediatricians can effectively diagnose non-urgent illnesses remotely.

"Often we see families bring their children to an emergency room for care for a variety of ailments, including colds and flus that can easily be treated with a diagnosis by a pediatrician via telemedicine," said Rutu Ezhuthachan, M.D., Meridian Chief Medical Officer. "This pilot program demonstrated the efficacy of bringing quality healthcare directly to where it's needed most. It ensures that our YouthCare members receive high-quality, accessible care in a timely and convenient fashion. It's one way Meridian enhances member benefits and patient care with innovative services."

Of the 36,000 dependents covered by YouthCare, approximately 30% of members are young children ages 5 or under, who are historically more prone to emergency room visits for common illnesses like colds, flu and earaches. Rather than going to an ER, Blueberry provides urgent care when a patient may need diagnosis and care and cannot access their primary care physician. More than 2,400 YouthCare members have enrolled in the program since March and the expansion to all members means the state's most vulnerable children have another resource for fast, effective care leading into cold and flu season.

"Through our collaboration with Meridian, we're excited to offer more families the convenience and reassurance of immediate access to quality pediatric care without leaving their homes," said Dr. Lyndsey Garbi, Chief Medical Officer of Blueberry Pediatrics.

Rather than going to an ER, Blueberry provides urgent care when a patient may need diagnosis and care and cannot access their primary care physician. Telehealth tools are not a replacement for a member's primary care provider who sees children for annual physicals, chronic care management, specialist referrals, vaccines, ADHD management, or illnesses requiring in-person care.

For more information on the benefits and services YouthCare offers its members, visit [LYouthcare.com](#).

About Meridian Health Plan of Illinois

Meridian Health Plan of Illinois, Inc. and its family of health plans provide government-sponsored managed care services to families, children, seniors, and individuals with complex medical needs. This includes Meridian's Medicaid and Medicare-Medicaid plans, and YouthCare HealthChoice Illinois. YouthCare is a specialized program designed to address the healthcare needs of Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) youth in out-of-home placement and former foster youth. Meridian connects members to care and offers comprehensive services to support lifelong health and wellness. Meridian is a [Centene Corporation company](#), a leading healthcare enterprise committed to helping people live healthier lives. Learn more at [ILmeridian.com](#).

About Blueberry Pediatrics

[Blueberry Pediatrics](#) leads in providing virtual pediatric care, ensuring families have 24/7 access to pediatricians and child health experts. By prioritizing accessibility and quality care, Blueberry Pediatrics aims to redefine how pediatric healthcare is delivered, making it more convenient and effective for families nationwide.

SOURCE Meridian of Illinois

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