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Introducing: the health care translator

By Alan Wechsler

BlueShield of Northeastern New York in Colonie has added a healthadvocacy service for members to learn more about their tests, doctors or treatment.

For the service, BlueShield tapped Health Advocate Inc., based outside Philadelphia. BlueShield members will be able to call a toll-free number 24 hours a day to discuss any health issue with an advocate. The number will be mailed to members soon.

Such advocates, supported by a team of medical directors and administrative experts, can be used to help patients with confusing or complex health issues, according to BlueShield.

They can explain tests and results or treatments and medications. They also can obtain medical appointments and help to find the right doctor for complicated cases. And they can help arrange for nursing homes or other community resources, according to BlueShield.

The offer is meant to create value to BlueShield's products, the company said, and help attract more members in an increasingly competitive market.

BlueShield is owned by Buffalo-based insurer HealthNow New York Inc.

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