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CareFirst to give incentives to primary care physicians

Maryland Health commission approves insurer's plan

September 20, 2010 | by Andrea K. Walker, The Baltimore Sun

State health officials have approved a plan by CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield to reward primary physicians for [improving](#) health outcomes for patients.

The [insurance company](#) is the first in the state to be approved by the Maryland Health Care Commission for the "single payer" medical home initiative.

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The program is designed to encourage doctors who participate to focus on treating the sickest patients. The [insurance](#) company hopes that if people visit primary care physicians, illness would be caught and treated early. This in turn would [prevent](#) more serious — and costly — conditions down the road.

It is a popular concept being promoted by federal health care reform as well.

Under the CareFirst [program](#), doctors form panels or practices of five to 20 primary care physicians so they can pool [resources](#) to treat patients.

Doctors who participate can receive incentives by three methods:

- A 12 percent increase in reimbursements upon enrollment
- Additional [fees](#) for [better](#) engagement with their patients
- Higher reimbursement fees for [developing](#) care [plans](#) for patients with chronic or multiple chronic conditions

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