

CASE STUDY

Maternity Case Management Avoids Escalating Costs of Prolonged NICU Stay

Challenge

Babies born very prematurely require NICU admission for highly specialized intensive care and support. An extended length of stay in the NICU adds tens of thousands of dollars to the total cost of care. The infant will also require post-discharge care and follow-up to ensure the healthiest possible outcome.

Solution

Proactive enrollment in maternity case management mitigates the risk of high-cost NICU claims while enabling nurse case managers to closely monitor mother and baby for any post-discharge health issues.

Solution in Action

During early-stage pregnancy, a plan member (“Laura”) was diagnosed with COVID-19, which can affect blood flow to the baby and harm fetal growth. Laura was enrolled in the Maternity Management program, a specialty solution within the triple URAC-accredited Valenz® Care Management suite. Her son was delivered at 30 weeks gestation with severe growth deficiencies. He was admitted to a Level 3 NICU.

At 11 weeks old, the infant was ready for discharge in all areas except nutrition, as he was still unable to manage oral feeding. His parents, who lived more than an hour from the nearest hospital and three hours from a NICU, refused the placement of a gastrostomy tube that would facilitate feeding at home. In addition, Laura was diagnosed with postpartum depression and anxiety, a common issue in parents with babies in the NICU.

The neonatal case manager – a highly experienced registered nurse – worked with the parents and NICU staff to coordinate discharge with intensive home health and outpatient therapy follow-up. The case manager also provided extensive education and care coordination to the parents regarding feeding options and how to manage tube feedings at home. Laura received a referral to a therapist as well to help manage her mental health concerns.

Outcomes

The baby was able to leave the hospital promptly with home healthcare services, a nasogastric tube and feeding pump. His discharge avoided a prolonged stay in a Level 2 NICU for management of his feeding issues, **saving the health plan an estimated \$54,200.**

“A premature birth and the resulting complications are extremely stressful for a new mom. With the help of our Maternity Management program, mom and baby got the specialized care they needed without a longer NICU stay. That means lower hospital costs for the member, and a happy homecoming for the entire family.”

— Valenz Maternity Case Manager

Specialized
care for baby
and mother

\$54,200
cost avoidance
for the employer
or member

Improved
outcomes and
member
experience