

More Detailed EmpiRx Update (If you are covered through Kaiser, you do not use EmpiRx and this section does not apply to you).

2022-23 School Year

PFT conducted a survey of members accessing prescription drug benefits from EmpiRx, which indicated numerous concerns.

Fall 2023

EmpiRx created three new programs in response to PFT member concerns.

- Retail 90: Allows members to receive a 3-month supply of meds for the cost of two copays at in-network pharmacies. Previously, access was only available through the long term rx mail order program.
- Clinical Light and Variable Co-pay Assistance Program: Members were contacted individually if they were eligible for these new programs, which were created to address the high cost of specialty medications and the frequency of prior authorizations.

May/June 2024

A satisfaction survey went out to EmpiRx subscribers in all PUSD units.

- 376 active employees and retirees responded out of 2,021 total enrollments
- Top reported concerns: Denial and prior authorization process, lack of prior authorization status notifications, mail order processing issues/errors, slow mail order shipping, no auto refill available, and customer service inconsistencies.
 - Of greatest concern were issues with the prior authorization (PA) process (9.8% of participants reported). Survey participants emphasized the importance of improving the communication between EmpiRx, the prescriber, and the member during the PA process.
 - The second highest concern involved issues with the mail order set-up, shipping time and notifications to members.
 - EmpiRx is rolling out a new platform with improvements, based on concerns, August 1.
- Some respondents requested benefit enhancements, such as meds for weight loss. Adding coverage for GLP-1 meds would add a cost of about \$14K per user. This would add a projected 2 million/year to program costs.
- Committee discussed the benefits of prevention over bariatric surgery which is covered 100% and is more expensive. Requested data on these costs.

EmpiRx reported they would roll out a new platform with improvements, based on concerns in the survey results, August 1.

June 2024

The joint PUSD, PSEA, PFT Insurance Committee received information based on their request to go to bid for a new prescription carrier. Keenan, PUSD's Insurance Broker, put out a request for proposal to 7 companies, analyzed the bids, and narrowed it down to the best four. Then, a third-party reviewer determined the top two most competitive bids from among these four: EmpiRx & Express Scripts (ESI). Keenan reported on the pros and cons of switching to ESI to the Committee on June 10:

Pros of switching to ESI

- Change in formulary could result in a lesser copay for some members.
- There may be other pharmacy opportunities.
- There may be more automated processes.

Cons of switching to ESI

- There will be member disruption if we change to Express Scripts.
- Change in formulary list would negatively impact some. (.1 positive and .6 negative rating for formulary change).
- Those who have gone through step therapy or prior authorization may go through changes or be asked to do it again.
- ESI requires subscribers to receive a call from them each month to have specialty meds sent. They will not allow specialty meds to be given in a 90-day supply.
- Ralph's pharmacies are not in ESI

The committee discussed whether to switch prescription drug carriers. Since the pros outweigh the cons at this time, the Committee was in consensus to renew EmpiRx for one year (2025) and to re-evaluate in late January/early February. Next steps: assess EmpiRx improvements and get bids from a greater number of carriers.