



Abacus Health Care
Healthy Weight Program Proposal
for
State of North Carolina RFI for GLP-1 GIP-GLP-1 Agonists
RFI 270-20240419GLP

May 16, 2024



Executive Summary:

Obesity was declared a disease by the National Institutes of Health in 1998 and in 2013 the American Medical Association voted to recognize it as a chronic disease that needs treatment and prevention. This decision was a key milestone in the acceptance of obesity as a disease and the development of evidence-based approaches to prevention and treatment.

According to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), 42.4% of US adults are obese, and 30.7% are overweight. A 2023 report from GlobalData estimates that obesity and overweight cost U.S. businesses and employees \$425.5 billion in economic costs.

While GLP-1 GIP-GLP-1 agonists have been proven to be an effective treatment for obesity, long term sustained weight loss post medication discontinuation has yet to be proven. This fact, coupled with the costs and popularity of these medications, has driven employers to a difficult decision to cover these medications or remove them from formulary all together.

The State of North Carolina is seeking responses to manage the proper utilization of GLP-1 GIP-GLP-1 agonists, that will ensure the right plan members are provided access to the medications based on medical necessity; that will deliver long-term sustainable weight loss; and would provide a cost benefit for the State's health plan.

Abacus Health aims to provide the State of North Carolina with a response that will meet the needs of the State financially, and its plan members medically. The response will meet the State's goals by providing a program integrated with a stand-alone adjunct PBM with a comprehensive national network and a restricted formulary focused on anti-obesity medications only allowing program participants access to these medications without offering them to all plan members. Access is controlled through specific eligibility, a requirement for in person prescribing based on specific BMIs and comorbid chronic conditions, and requiring a commitment from members to participate in a comprehensive weight loss maintenance program.

About Abacus Health Solutions:

From our inception in 1988 and at its core, Abacus Health Solutions has been a research and development firm that develops interventions based on behavioral science and that leverages technology to reach populations at scale. Today Abacus translates evidence-based medicine to real world interventions for multiple stakeholders.

Abacus Health is a pioneer in the behaviorally focused disease management field. Our approach is simple, attack the high-cost drivers with precision focused interventions proven to improve health, reduce hospitalizations and lower costs.

Utilizing the latest in healthcare technologies, our programs for diabetes, hypertension and weight loss are built to foster high rates of engagement and adoption, drive members to providers, leverage remote monitoring technologies, and align with healthcare goals of quality and outcomes. This results in healthier, less costly, more productive employees.



Abacus Healthy Weight Program Proposal:

Treating obesity supports a substantial portion of the population by reducing and preventing many chronic health conditions like diabetes, cardiovascular disease and the associated claims costs.

Abacus proposes a comprehensive approach that incorporates an intensive behavioral risk management intervention to identify, engage, and treat high-risk members with a documented medical diagnosis of obesity.

The Healthy Weight program as it would be presented to plan members is a voluntary, and confidential benefit offering that provides participants with **short term access to GLP-1 GIP-GLP1 agonists as part of comprehensive weight loss/maintenance program including health coaching on nutrition, physical activity, and behavior change strategies.**

The program utilizes the principles of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), leverages evidence-based care for obesity combined with Abacus behavioral management intervention to identify, engage, and treat members with obesity, and focuses from the outset on long-term maintenance of weight loss teaching participants to Keep It Off® over time.

The program consists of three phases, running over a period of 24 months and starts with member identification based on medical necessity, followed by the medication-assisted weight loss intervention phase, and completed with the post-medication Keep It Off® phase.

Plan Member Identification & Eligibility:

Member identification and program eligibility based on risk differentiates the Healthy Weight program from others. Abacus' approach to member identification and program eligibility utilizes historic medical claims to risk stratify the population, ensuring that those who are appropriate for the intervention receive communication and outreach materials for access.

Abacus will work with the State of North Carolina to review medical and pharmacy claims prior to program launch, developing a protocol for member inclusion. In general, Abacus makes recommendations to provide an estimated cost prior to receiving medical and pharmacy claims. Abacus will help the State determine the appropriate population to target:

1. Group 1 - 30% to 40% of the population who could benefit from behavioral focused medically supervised weight loss.
2. Group 2 - 5-10% of the population diagnosed in medical claims having a BMI of 30 or greater and at least one chronic condition or comorbidity.
3. Group 3 - 3-5% of the population diagnosed in medical claims with morbid obesity having a BMI of 35 or greater.

Given the size of the State of North Carolina's health plan population and to control costs, Abacus suggests focusing on Group 3 of the population having a diagnosis of morbid obesity documented in medical claims. Additionally, and to protect the State from discriminatory practices, Abacus will allow members to join the program should their own health care provider provide a written confirmation that the member should be allowed to join based on medical necessity.

While Group 3 (3 to 5% of the potentially eligible population) may seem like a lot of plan members, Abacus projects only 50% to 65% of the plan members who are identified in this group will enroll in the program. **Abacus estimates 21,000 to 35,000 to participate in the program over a period of 5 years.**

Weight Loss Intervention:

The weight loss intervention phase of the Healthy Weight program leverages the principles of the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy model to engage identified members in a journey to better health, meeting the plan member where they are and focuses on long-term behavior change.

Plan members are required to complete multiple activities to earn access to GLP-1 GIP-GLP1 agonist medication including:

1. Meeting in person with their own physician to obtain a prescription for the appropriate medication. Abacus does not prescribe medication but rather works with the plan member's physician to do so.
2. Meeting routinely with an Abacus Health Coach to focus on specific behaviors through a personalized plan designed for each plan member.
3. Weighing in a minimum of 12 times every 30 days using an Abacus-provided cellular connected scale.

When plan members are engaged with their physician, Abacus Health Coach, and routinely weighing in, they earn access to GLP-1 GIP-GLP-1 agonist medications as prescribed by their physician along with an additional \$0 copay incentive to drive engagement and program adherence. Members must remain active in completing the program requirements each month in order to qualify for access to the GLP-1 - CLP-1 agonist.

To address the roadblocks the State of North Carolina has encountered from its PBM and the pharmacy manufacturers in installing any limits on GLP1 GIP-GLP agonist medications, **Abacus provides an adjunct PBM with a national network and restricted formulary of anti-obesity medications. Program participants active in meeting program requirements will receive a secondary RX card from Abacus, to cover the point-of-sale costs of the medication and associated copays for up to a program maximum of twelve (12) prescription fills with a 30-day-supply limit for each fill.** Ingredient cost and copays are funded by a health plan loss fund escrow account set up between the State of North Carolina and Abacus.

Medication rebates will be shared with the State of North Carolina and distributed quarterly as received from the pharmacy benefit manager.

Plan members are expected to be in the Weight Loss Intervention phase and on GLP-1 GIP-GLP-1 agonist for 8 to 10 months depending on weight loss goal achievement. Plan members will have a maximum of 12 prescription fills for GLP-1 medications.

Should members become unengaged in the program and/or not lose weight, they will be removed from the program and **access to GLP1 medication(s) will be terminated.**



Keep It Off®:

The time-limited availability of the GLP-1 GIP-GLP-1 agonists will be made clear to program participants from the outset, and health coaching will focus not only on weight loss while on the medications but developing the behaviors to sustain weight loss post-medication. Plan members are transitioned to the Keep It Off® portion of the program upon completion of the weight loss phase. Completion of the weight loss phase means the plan member had met their weight loss goal and plan members' utilization of GLP-1 GIP-GLP-1 agonists has been discontinued.

Following evidence-based care standards, plan members are required to complete an additional 12 months of care in the Healthy Weight program. Completing an additional 12 months of care is designed to solidify the behavior and lifestyle changes necessary to maintain weight loss for the long term, maximizing the impact of the State of North Carolina's spend on GLP-1 GIP-GLP-1 agonists and the Healthy Weight program.

Plan members are required to perform a variety of activities designed to reinforce the behaviors learned during the weight loss intervention phase including:

1. Meeting routinely with an Abacus Health Coach to focus on specific behaviors and dietary practices through a personalized plan designed for each plan member.
2. Tracking physical activity including step counts monthly
3. Continuing to weigh in a minimum of 12 times every 30 days using the cellular connected scale provided by Abacus.

Plan members meeting these requirements will earn up to a \$50 Amazon Health gift card per month during the Keep It Off® phase, gift card value is dependent on the State of North Carolina's budget, but is suggested to be a meaningful amount to help incentivize the healthy behaviors that will help maintain weight loss and maximize the value of the investment the State of North Carolina is making in its plan members through the use GLP-1 GIP-GLP-1 agonists.

Implementation & Account Management:

Abacus uses a team-based account management structure. Each account is implemented by the Account Manager who will work with the client ongoing after implementation. The Account Management team is led by our Director of Client Services. Each account has a dedicated Account Manager who is supported by a Senior Account Manager and another Account Manager, providing back up as needed.

Implementation takes approximately 90 days from contract signature and focuses on 3 main areas: program setup, claims and eligibility data feeds, and communication planning. Program setup is based on plan member identification and eligibility to meet agreed-upon risk criteria. To run the program Abacus will work with the State of North Carolina's medical TPA and PBM to obtain plan eligibility and claims to identify members for program inclusion. Communications focuses on how best to engage the State of North Carolina's eligible population and results in a detailed communication plan that is reviewed and updated quarterly.



Reporting & Measurement of Success:

Abacus’ reporting is 100% transparent and delivered both quarterly and annually. Quarterly reporting focuses primarily on program adoption by identified plan members, spend on GLP-1 GIP-GLP-1 agonists and program status by phase. Additionally, data points such as the number of weigh-ins, number of meetings with coaches, and pounds lost will be reported. As received and then quarterly going forward, rebates earned on GLP-1 GIP-GLP-1 agonists will be shared and paid to the State of North Carolina.

Annually, reporting will include additional data points beyond the quarterly reports focused on clinical measure improvements like BMI, and weight. Annual reporting is designed to show population health improvement. Additional clinical and financial metrics can be discussed should Abacus be selected to support the State’s health plan members.

Clinical Staff Credentials:

Abacus' clinical staff is comprised of Pharmacists, Nurses, Registered Dieticians, Health Coaches, and Behavioral Psychologists. Each plan member is assigned a specific Health Coach for the entirety of the program. Abacus coaches’ credentials include PharmD, RN and RD. In addition, our coaches come from different educational backgrounds and many have complimentary credentials such as being Board Certified through NBHWC (National Board of Health and Wellness Coaches); hold an NCCA accredited Health Coach, Fitness, or Nutrition Certification; and have completed Undergraduate and Graduate degrees in Health Education, Public Health, Nutrition and Dietetics, or other Health related fields. Coaches receive ongoing training in evidence-based approaches to support adherence and behavioral management for weight loss maintenance.

Budget:

Abacus’ Healthy Weight program is priced on a per participant per month basis, tying fees to program enrollment. The program per participant per month fee is [REDACTED]. Abacus also charges a one-time [REDACTED] for program set up, data integration of one medical TPA and one pharmacy benefit manager and for communication planning and development. [REDACTED]

A conservative and detailed 5-year estimated cost projection is shown below.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]



1. Annual fees at risk considers 24 months of total participation in a single year, and that all members will complete the entire program.
2. Cost of the medications will vary based on medications prescribed and current price at time of dispensing.
3. Estimated rebates will be finalized upon Abacus selection to manage the program by the State.
4. Keep It Off Rewards assume all members will complete the full 12-months of the Keep It Off phase.

Conclusion:

Deploying Abacus' Healthy Weight program allows the State of North Carolina to offer GLP-1 GIP-GLP-1 agonists in a manner that is consistent with the State's goals of:

1. Controlled and short-term access to the medications based on specific medical necessity criteria.
2. Providing limited, restricted access to anti-obesity medications by utilizing a stand-alone, adjunct PBM with a national network and restricted formulary and requiring participants continuously to be active in meeting program requirements
3. Requiring plan members who want to participate in the program to meet with their health care provider in person and explore all options prior to prescribing. Inclusion of the personal physician, rather than having a separate program physician, is an additional reinforcing component aimed at long-term maintenance of weight loss.
4. Providing support beyond medication to drive healthier lifestyle decisions by plan members.
5. Measurement of impact both clinically and financially for the State of North Carolina health plan

The net result of offering the Abacus Healthy Weight program in conjunction with GLP-1 GIP-GLP-1 agonist are healthier less costly plan members, by significantly reducing the risk from other chronic conditions like diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

