



# Taking Charge of Your Health Care ...A Closer Look at Quality

This pre-enrollment flyer for employees contains many messages about quality: the importance of quality, that quality varies, and that the choice of a plan can influence quality of care.  
Provided by the Ford Motor Company.

Here is some important pre-enrollment information to help you as you think about quality and choosing the right health plan for you and your family.

## Why Is Quality Important?

### With Your Car, Your Home, Your HEALTH CARE...Quality Matters

Most of us are choosy consumers. We try to get the most value for our money with everything we buy. Think about the big decisions you make – like buying a car or a new home. With a car, you might compare safety, dependability, and EPA ratings. With a new home and neighborhood, you might look at schools, the mix of shops and services, and the crime rate.

When it comes to your health care, quality can have a big impact. The fact is, health care quality varies a lot – just as it does with cars, neighborhoods and other things you compare and choose. There are health plans, doctors and hospitals that do a great job, and others that don't. And spending more doesn't necessarily buy you better quality.

Choosing a health plan is an important decision.

You should think about a lot of things:

- ... benefits you and your family need
- ... costs you can afford
- ... how easy it will be to get care when you need it
- ... quality of care you'll receive



Before a Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) is offered to employees and retirees, the plan undergoes an extensive evaluation process. Even though we're committed to offering health plans that perform better than other plans in the country, there are quality differences in the health plans offered.

## A "Quality Report Card" for Health Plans



All health plans – and their physicians and hospitals – **are not the same**. That is why the UAW and Ford Motor Company have joined with DaimlerChrysler, General Motors, and other groups to create a "Quality Report Card" for health plans.

Where can you find health plan quality information? Your 2000 health care open enrollment package (due to arrive in January). It will provide you some important information about quality and health plans.

The Quality Report Card, which shows ratings in five quality categories, will help you compare the HMOs offered during enrollment time. In the future, the Quality Report Card will be expanded to include all of the different types of health plans.

## Who Rates the Health Plans?

Information for the Quality Report Card has been collected, scored and reported by an independent organization, not by the three companies or the UAW. The information comes from surveys of health plan members and records of the care provided by health plans and their participating physicians.

**The UAW and Ford Motor Company Quality Commitment**  
The UAW and Ford Motor Company are committed to providing clear, accurate, quality information you can use to help make health plan choices that are right for you.





## Quality Report Card Categories ★★★★★

The Quality Report Card in your 2000 health care open enrollment package will tell you about health plan quality in five areas that are important to people and their families:

- **Access and Service** – How easy is it for plan members to get the services and treatments they need?
- **Physician Communication and Service** – How well do physicians in the plan talk to, listen to, and care for their patients?
- **Staying Healthy** – How well does the plan help members stay healthy and avoid illness through preventive care, reduction of health risks, early detection of illness, and education?
- **Getting Better/Living with Illness** – How well does the plan care for people when they are sick, injured, or living with a chronic illness, such as diabetes?
- **Accreditation** – Have the plan's quality-related structures, processes, and performance been approved by an independent national organization?



With quality health care, people feel better, function better, and enjoy a better quality of life.

## What Happens When Quality Isn't Considered?

Here are some alarming examples of why looking at quality is important:

- More than 100,000 people die in U.S. hospitals every year from avoidable errors, such as drug interactions (Journal of the American Medical Association, 1998)
- As many as one of every six hysterectomies (removal of the uterus) performed each year are unnecessary (Institute of Medicine, 1998)
- Annual eye exams reduce the risk of blindness for people with diabetes. Medicare beneficiaries with diabetes in one area of the country are almost three times more likely to receive the eye exams they need than Medicare beneficiaries in another (Atlas of Health Care, 1999)

Quality health care means that health plans, physicians, and other health professionals do the **right things** at the **right time** in the **right amount** for the **right people**.



## The Last Word – Quality

Quality, cost, and benefits are important parts of a good health plan choice. When you receive your 2000 open enrollment materials, take a look at cost and benefits. Also compare the quality ratings of health plans. When it comes to the care and service you'll receive, quality may be the most important area where your health plan needs to measure up.

When Considering a Health Plan...Make Quality Part of Your Decision