**Backgrounder: Primary Care Benefits Package**

**Nassau, The Bahamas – February 16, 2017 —** Today, the NHI Secretariat launched the “NHI Benefits” campaign, which educates Bahamians on which services and treatments will be covered under the Primary Care phase of NHI Bahamas.

Primary Care covers a wide variety of disease prevention and treatment options. Doctor visits, certain medications, pregnancy care and much more are covered under the benefits package, with no cost at point of care for all legal Bahamian residents.

The initial roll-out phase of NHI Bahamas covers Primary Care services only, but does not include certain services, such as non-primary care specialist, dentist and ophthalmologist/eye care specialist visits. A Primary Care Physician might offer services that are both covered by the primary care benefits package and not. Over time, NHI Bahamas coverage will expand to include additional services, secondary and tertiary, once other health system strengthening activities have advanced and the health care system is ready for full implementation.

The Primary Care benefits package does include the following specific health care services:

**Maternity and infants 0-12**

Making sure you have comprehensive prenatal care is very important to ensuring that mothers and their babies are healthy. Under the Primary Care Benefits package, pregnant women do not have to pay out of pocket for:

* Pregnancy tests
* Pre-natal vitamins
* Doctor visits
* Blood tests to learn your blood type and check for any diseases
* Ultrasounds to check the baby’s growth and find out the sex
* Screening for genetic defects such as down-syndrome

Once your baby is born, he or she is covered for doctor visits from birth to 12 months. This includes:

* Tests and measurements at birth
* Immunizations
* Regular check ups

**Children (ages 12 months – 12 years)**

The Primary Care benefits package covers regular doctor visits for children aged 12 months to 12 years for:

* Growth measurements
* Hearing and vision measurements
* Autism screening
* Monitoring of teeth growth and fluoride to prevent tooth decay
* Tuberculosis testing
* Asthma care
* All required immunizations including: mumps, measles and booster shots

**Teenagers (aged 13-18)**

Under the NHI Bahamas Primary Care benefits package, teenagers can receive:

* Annual check ups
* Counselling on healthy lifestyle choices including: diet and exercise, safe sex and the risks of alcohol and tobacco use
* Mental health screening
* Testing and treatment of sexually transmitted infections
* Vaccinations

**Men**

Men have an elevated risk of developing certain illnesses including heart disease, diabetes, and prostate disease. The NHI Bahamas Primary Care benefits package takes care of men’s health through:

* Monitoring and early detection of disease
* Annual prostate tests for men over the age of 40
* Medication for high blood pressure and high cholesterol
* Counselling on how to reduce risks of diseases like diabetes and alcoholism

**Women**

Women have unique reproductive health and disease prevention needs. Primary Care services for women include:

* PAP smears and pelvic examinations
* Birth control medication and devices
* HPV vaccine
* Screening for breast and cervical cancer
* Hormone therapy for women going through menopause
* Pregnancy care

**Elderly**

Adults over 50 receive additional benefits to ensure healthy aging. From medication to disease prevention and management, older Bahamians receive:

* Medication to control blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis and other issues
* Regular screening for dementia, depression, alcohol misuse and elder abuse

The Primary Care benefits package will also cover treatment for common diseases and illnesses, including the following:

**Asthma**

Asthma is a concern for persons of all ages. If poorly managed, asthma can result in a lower quality of life. If you think you or your child has asthma, the NHI Bahamas Primary Care benefits package covers:

* Testing of lung function
* Lung x-ray
* EKG of the heart
* If diagnosed, asthma medications such as inhalers and allergy drugs are included

**Cancer and cancer prevention**

Cancer is one of the leading causes of death amongst Bahamians. Preventative measures, including regular screening can help identify cancer at the early stages before it becomes more serious. The Primary Care package covers:

* Specific tests that screen for prostate, breast and cervical cancers
* Blood tests to assess risks of developing cancer
* HPV vaccine and high-risk HPV testing for women

**Diabetes**

Approximately one in four Bahamians have diabetes. Additionally, 80% of Bahamians are overweight, which significantly increases the risk of developing diabetes. The Primary Care benefits package can help persons prevent or manage diabetes through:

* Diet and exercise counselling
* Blood sugar monitoring
* At home glucose monitor
* Management assistance through regular doctor visits
* Essential medication such as insulin

**Hypertension and high cholesterol**

Approximately 16% of Bahamians aged 25-64 have high cholesterol and one third have high blood pressure. Primary Care benefits help patients through:

* Counselling on healthy eating and exercise to lower risk
* Blood pressure testing and monitoring
* Blood sugar testing and monitoring
* Cholesterol screening
* Analysis of liver and kidney functions
* EKG to assess heart function

Other services covered under the Primary Care benefits package include doctor visits, labs, diagnostic imaging and medication, as well as mental health treatment:

**Doctor visits**

Regular doctor visits are critical to ensuring you remain in good health. With the NHI Bahamas primary care benefits package, regular doctor visits include:

* Annual physical examination
* Non-emergency medical care when you are sick

**Labs, diagnostic imaging and medication**

With NHI Bahamas, legal Bahamian residents no longer have to pay for certain lab tests or diagnostic imaging to find out if they are sick. This includes:

* Blood tests to check immune function, blood sugar, cholesterol, hormone levels and organ function
* Blood tests for HIV and blood disorders like sickle cell anemia
* Mammograms
* X-rays
* Ultrasounds
* Some medication provided at no cost

**Mental health**

Too many Bahamians suffer with mental illness in silence. Left untreated, mental illness can negatively impact your quality of life. With the NHI Bahamas Primary Care benefits package you can receive:

* Assessment and diagnosis of mental illness
* Counselling
* Medication such as anti-depressants

For a full breakdown of services, refer to the Primary Care Benefits Package (Physician Services): <http://www.nhibahamas.gov.bs/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/NHI-Bahamas-Primary-Care-Benefits-Package-Physician-Only-1.pdf>

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