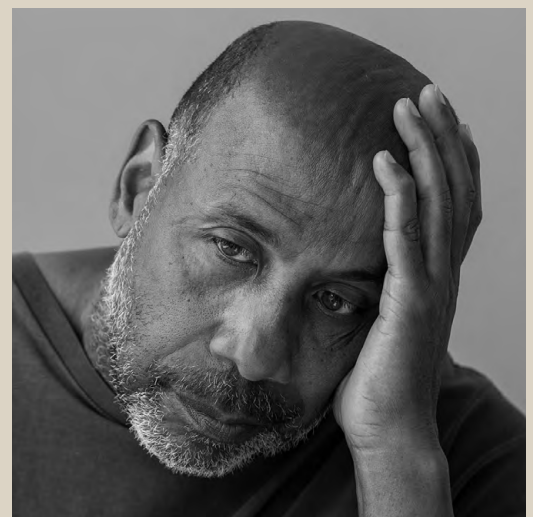




Addressing the Diaper Divide:

A Playbook for Health Plans



Written by Marlee Septak, Copywriter at Aeroflow Urology

DIAPER | DIVIDE



This playbook aims to shed light on a critical issue that often goes unnoticed - the Diaper Divide. Many families, particularly those living in poverty, struggle to afford an adequate supply of diapers for their infants and toddlers, leading to negative health and socioeconomic consequences. Health plans play a pivotal role in addressing this issue by recognizing the importance of diapers as a health necessity and implementing strategies to bridge the Diaper Divide. This paper discusses the impact of the Diaper Divide, explores potential solutions, and provides recommendations for health plans to proactively support families in need.



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Background on the Diaper Divide

The Diaper Divide is a multifaceted issue that extends beyond the realm of infant care. While the public's attention is often drawn to the challenges faced by low-income parents in affording diapers for their little ones, it is essential to recognize that individuals with incontinence, including people with disabilities and adults with bladder and bowel control problems, also experience a pressing need for access to incontinence supplies such as diapers. **The impact of this unmet need goes far beyond mere inconvenience, as it significantly affects the health and well-being of all parties involved.**¹

A survey conducted by Aeroflow Urology highlighted the financial struggles faced by over 1,000 individuals managing their own incontinence or caring for a loved one with the condition. **Among the respondents, 711 reported ongoing difficulties in affording**

incontinence products due to their high costs.² However, the repercussions extend well beyond financial constraints, manifesting as mental and physical health issues, missed opportunities for work, activities, and the need for individuals to make difficult financial choices.

While the Diaper Divide persists, various factors exacerbate the challenges faced by individuals requiring incontinence supplies. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about rising costs, including the price of bladder and bowel control products, which further strains budgets. Government assistance programs designed to support low-income families often do not account for incontinence products as allowable expenses, leaving many individuals without access to vital supplies. Inflation rates are also impacting the Diaper Divide, forcing families and

individuals to make increasingly difficult decisions when prioritizing bills, groceries, or incontinence products. Moreover, the growing geriatric population increases the demand for senior incontinence supplies; therefore, intensifying the need for a comprehensive solution.

This playbook aims to shed light on the hidden aspects of the Diaper Divide, specifically focusing on the unseen groups of individuals who lack access to the essential medical supplies required for them to lead happy, healthy, and fulfilling lives. Additionally, it will examine the societal and socio-economic factors that contribute to the persistence of the Diaper Divide. **By understanding the breadth of this issue, healthcare providers and health plans can take significant steps toward bridging the gap and ensuring that individuals with incontinence receive the support and resources they urgently need.**



The Basics of Incontinence

Those living in the Diaper Divide have bladder and bowel control problems called incontinence.

Incontinence occurs when a person loses control of their bladder (urinary incontinence (UI) and/or bowels (fecal incontinence)), leading to the unintentional loss of urine or feces. Any person of any age can develop UI or fecal incontinence, and an individual may be diagnosed with different types of each. All types come with unwanted side effects, such as:

- **Leaking urine or feces throughout the day or night**
- **Dribbling urine after voiding the bladder**
- **Voiding the bladder more frequently than usual**
- **Feeling a sudden and strong urge to urinate**
- **Urinary or fecal retention** (inability to empty the bladder or bowels)
- **Wetting the bed at night**
- **Waking up multiple times at night to void the bladder**

What Is Incontinence?

Urinary Incontinence:

Loss of bladder control resulting in the unintentional loss of urine.

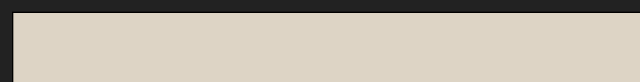
Fecal Incontinence:

Loss of bowel control resulting in the unintentional loss of feces.



Who is in Need of Incontinence Products?

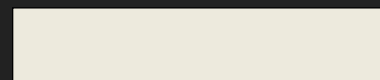
In the Aeroflow Urology study:



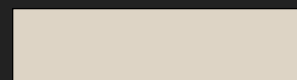
34% are infants



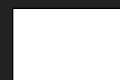
22.5% are children



Almost 20% are parents or seniors



15.5% are adults



6% are children with disabilities

Importance of Diapers for Health and Well-being

Diapers play a crucial role in promoting the health and overall well-being of individuals, particularly infants, toddlers, and those with bladder and bowel control issues. Recognizing the significance of diapers as a healthcare necessity is essential to comprehending the far-reaching impact of the Diaper Divide and the urgency of the issues at hand. The following points highlight the importance of diapers for health and well-being:

1. Hygiene and Infection Prevention

Diapers provide a sanitary and hygienic solution for managing bodily waste. For users, including infants, children, those with disabilities and adults, maintaining a clean and dry diaper helps prevent diaper rash, skin irritations, and infections. In the case of individuals with incontinence, proper containment of waste through diapers reduces the risk of skin breakdown, infections, and associated complications.

2. Comfort and Quality of Life

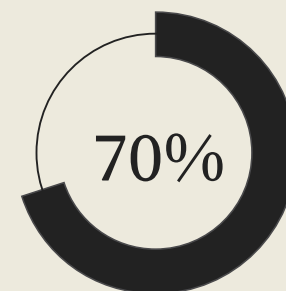
Wearing a clean and well-fitting diaper contributes to the comfort and quality of life for both infants and individuals with incontinence. Comfortable diapers help maintain a sense of dignity, promote mobility, and allow individuals to engage in daily activities without the fear of embarrassment or discomfort.

3. Sleep and Development

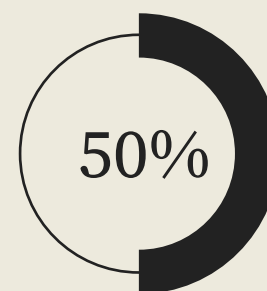
A consistent supply of diapers is vital for promoting healthy sleep patterns in infants and toddlers. Quality sleep is crucial for their growth, cognitive development, and emotional well-being. Moreover, individuals with incontinence can experience disrupted sleep and overall distress if they lack access to appropriate diapers, impacting their overall health and functioning.

4. Social Engagement and Participation

The availability of diapers has a profound impact on social interactions and participation. For infants and young children, wearing clean diapers enables them to participate in daycare, early childhood education, and social activities without interruptions. Similarly, individuals with incontinence can engage in work, social gatherings, and community events with confidence, leading to improved social connections and mental well-being.



Nearly 70% of responders needed diapers but **could not afford to purchase them.**



Nearly half of respondents said a member of their household has **experienced skin rashes due to a lack of supplies.**

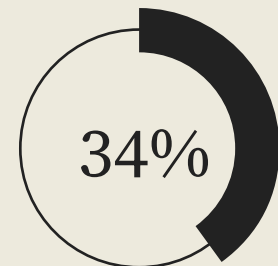
5. Prevention of Complications

Inadequate access to diapers can lead to severe health complications. Prolonged exposure to soiled diapers can result in urinary tract infections, skin infections, and other related issues. By ensuring a steady supply of clean diapers, these potential complications can be minimized, reducing the burden on individuals, caregivers, and healthcare systems.

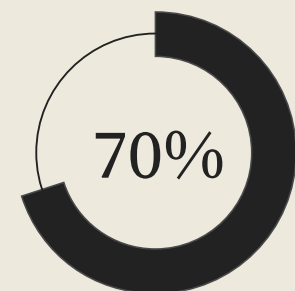
6. Mental and Emotional Well-being

The ability to maintain personal hygiene and access clean diapers positively impacts mental and emotional well-being. It reduces feelings of shame, embarrassment, and stress associated with managing incontinence or caring for infants. Addressing the Diaper Divide and providing adequate diaper support contributes to improved mental health outcomes for individuals and their caregivers.

Recognizing the importance of diapers as a fundamental aspect of health and well-being is crucial for health plans to take proactive steps in addressing the Diaper Divide. By ensuring access to diapers as an essential healthcare need, health plans can contribute to improved health outcomes, enhanced quality of life, and overall well-being for individuals of all ages affected by incontinence or those caring for infants and toddlers.



Around 34% of people say they are responsible for providing diapers for infants or toddlers.



Almost 70% of survey responders had to choose between buying incontinence supplies and other needs such as food, electricity, doctor's visits and transportations.



Understanding the Impact

Health Implications of Inadequate Diaper Supply

The lack of access to an adequate supply of diapers can have significant health implications, particularly for infants, toddlers, and individuals with incontinence. Understanding these health consequences is crucial in comprehending the urgency of addressing the Diaper Divide. The following points highlight the potential health implications of inadequate diaper supply:

1. Skin Irritations and Infections

When infants, young children, adults and those with disabilities are not provided with clean and dry diapers, they become susceptible to various skin irritations and infections. Prolonged exposure to wetness and soiled diapers can lead to diaper rash, bacterial or fungal infections, and skin breakdown. These conditions cause discomfort, pain, and can result in further complications if left untreated.

2. Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)

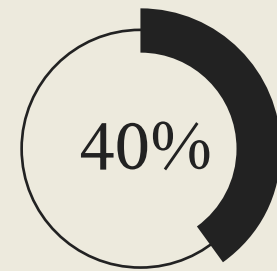
Inadequate diaper supply and prolonged wearing of wet or soiled diapers increase the risk of urinary tract infections in infants and young children. The warm and moist environment created by such conditions provides an ideal breeding ground for bacteria, potentially leading to UTIs. UTIs can cause discomfort, fever, and if left untreated, may result in more severe complications.

3. Sleep Disruptions and Development Issues

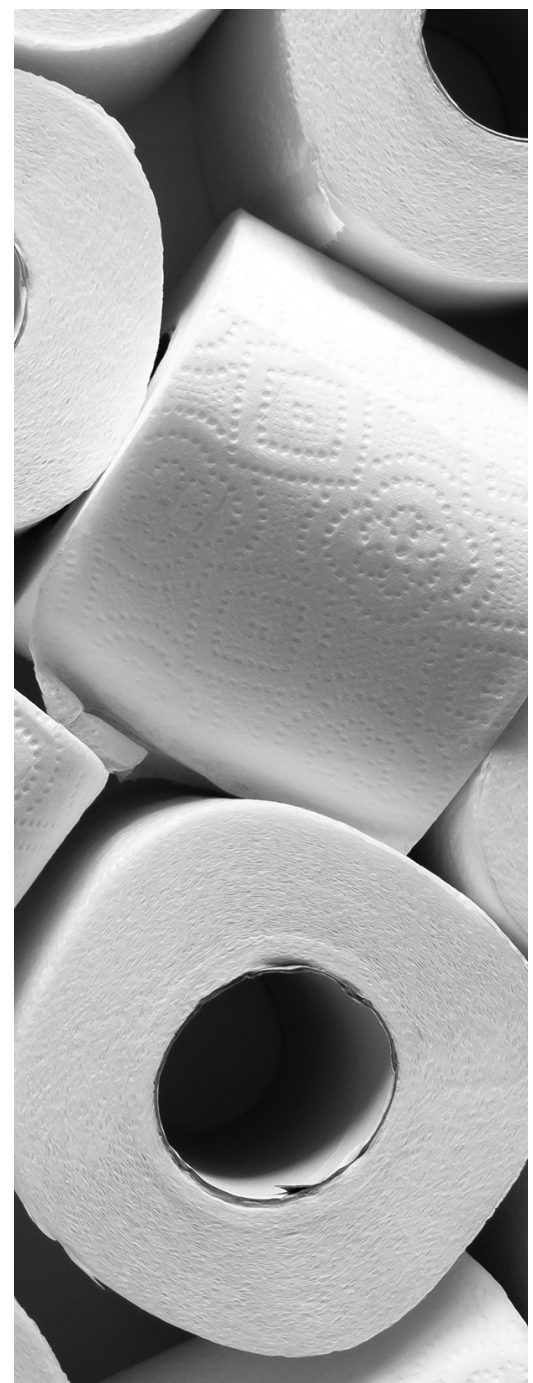
Infants and toddlers who do not have access to an adequate supply of diapers may experience disrupted sleep patterns. Uncomfortable or soiled diapers can lead to frequent waking and discomfort, affecting their overall sleep quality. Ultimately, disrupted sleep can impact cognitive development, mood regulation, and overall growth.

4. Emotional Distress and Psychological Impact

The lack of clean diapers can cause emotional distress for both infants and individuals with incontinence. For infants, discomfort from wearing wet or soiled diapers can lead to irritability, fussiness, and increased stress levels. Similarly, individuals with incontinence may experience feelings of embarrassment, shame, and anxiety due to the inability to manage their condition adequately.



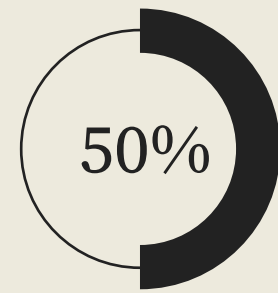
Almost 40% of respondents have a family member who has **experienced UTIs due to a lack of incontinence products.**



5. Impact on Overall Well-being

The health implications of inadequate diaper supply extend beyond specific conditions. The physical discomfort, emotional distress, and potential complications can significantly impact the overall well-being of affected individuals and their caregivers. These challenges can contribute to increased stress levels, reduced self-esteem, and diminished quality of life.

Addressing the Diaper Divide and ensuring a consistent supply of diapers is vital for mitigating these health implications. **Health plans can play a crucial role in recognizing diapers as a healthcare necessity and implementing strategies to support individuals and families in need.** By prioritizing access to clean and appropriate diapers, health plans can contribute to improved health outcomes, enhanced quality of life, and overall well-being for vulnerable populations affected by the Diaper Divide.



Nearly 50% of people **limit their food and fluid intake** because they can't afford to use another incontinence product.



Emotional and Psychological Effects on Caregivers, Adults, and Children

The impact of the Diaper Divide extends beyond the physical health consequences experienced by infants, toddlers, and individuals with incontinence. Caregivers, adults, and children directly affected by the inadequate supply of diapers also face significant emotional and psychological challenges. Understanding these effects is crucial in comprehending the holistic impact of the Diaper Divide. The following points highlight the emotional and psychological effects experienced by caregivers, adults, and children:

1. Caregiver Stress and Guilt

Caregivers, such as parents or family members, who struggle to provide an adequate supply of diapers for their infants or individuals with incontinence often experience high levels of stress and feelings of guilt. The inability to meet a basic necessity like diapers can create a sense of helplessness and inadequacy, leading to emotional strain and mental health challenges.

2. Emotional Burden

Caregivers may also experience a significant emotional burden as they witness the discomfort and potential health consequences faced by their loved ones due to the lack of diapers. Seeing their infants or loved ones with incontinence in distress can cause feelings of sadness, frustration, and a sense of responsibility to provide better care.

3. Increased Anxiety and Depression

The financial strain associated with purchasing diapers or the inability to afford an adequate supply can contribute to heightened levels of anxiety and depression in caregivers and adults. The constant worry about meeting basic needs and the added pressure of managing the emotional and physical well-being of their loved ones can take a toll on mental health.

4. Impact on Parent-Child Bonding

In cases where caregivers struggle to provide an adequate supply of diapers for their infants, the inability to maintain a clean and comfortable environment can hinder parent-child bonding. The stress and emotional strain experienced by caregivers may inadvertently affect the quality of interactions with their infants, potentially impacting the development of a secure attachment and overall parent-child relationship.

1 in 2

respondents **limit food or fluid intake** for a member of their household in an attempt to save incontinence products.

2 in 5

respondents have to **reuse dirty diapers or use products for an extended period of time** due to lack of supplies.

1 in 2

people have to **miss experiences or activities due to not having enough incontinence products.**

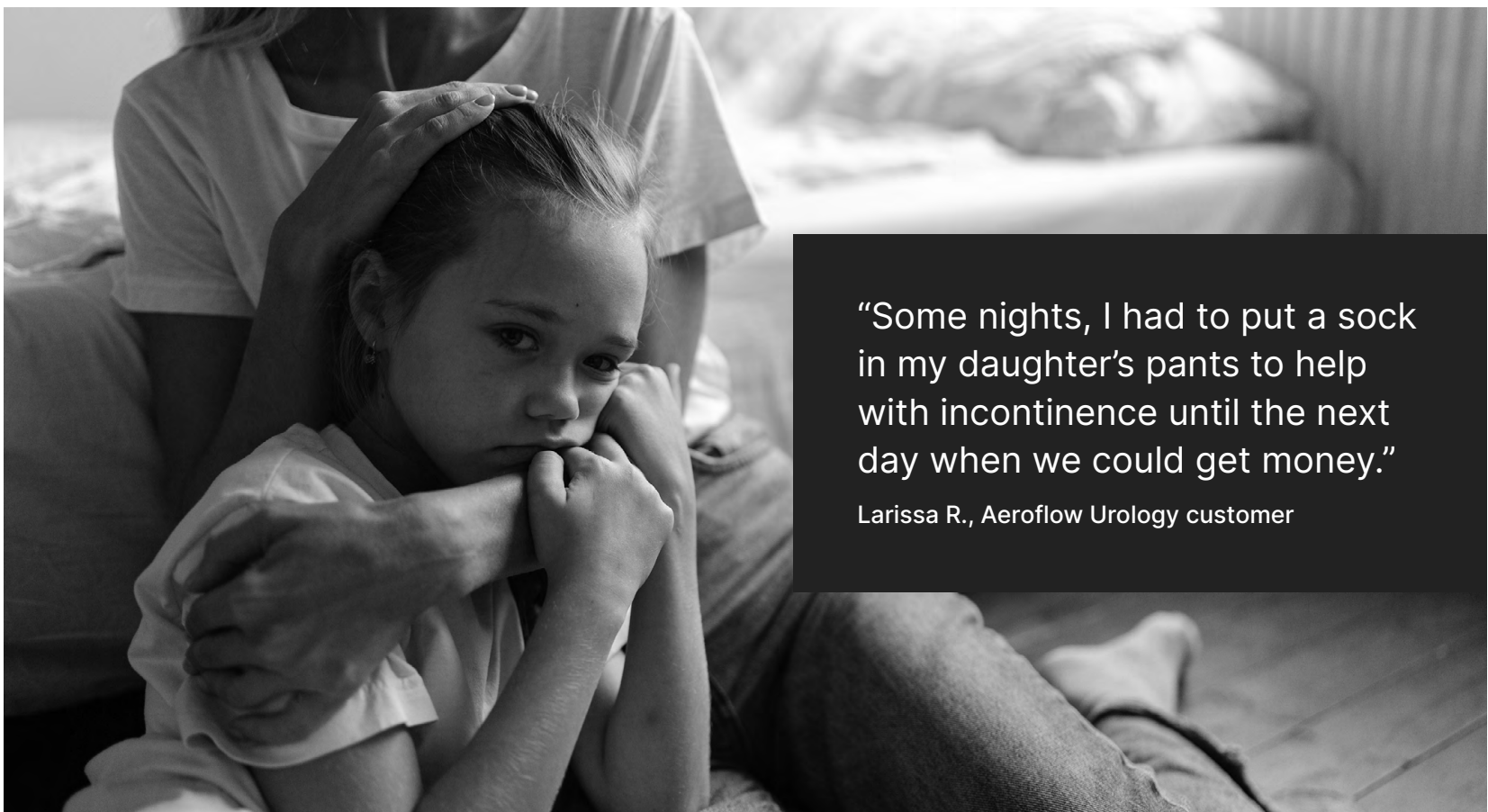
5. Emotional Distress in Adults with Incontinence

Adults living with incontinence, who face challenges in accessing diapers or incontinence supplies, may experience profound emotional distress. The inability to manage their condition effectively can lead to feelings of embarrassment, shame, and social isolation, affecting their self-esteem, mental well-being, and overall quality of life.

6. Psychological Impact on Children

Children who experience the consequences of the Diaper Divide, such as prolonged discomfort or unmet diapering needs, may exhibit emotional and behavioral changes. This can include increased irritability, anxiety, withdrawal, or regression in developmental milestones. The lack of proper diapering can disrupt their sense of security and emotional well-being.

Addressing the emotional and psychological effects on caregivers, adults, and children affected by the Diaper Divide is of utmost importance. **Health plans can play a vital role in implementing programs and support mechanisms that not only address the physical needs for diapers but also provide emotional support, counseling services, and resources for caregivers and affected individuals.** By recognizing and addressing the emotional impact of the Diaper Divide, health plans can contribute to fostering a more supportive and holistic approach to the well-being of families and individuals affected by this issue.



“Some nights, I had to put a sock in my daughter’s pants to help with incontinence until the next day when we could get money.”

Larissa R., Aeroflow Urology customer

Financial Burden and Long-Term Socioeconomic Consequences

The Diaper Divide places a significant financial burden on individuals, families, and communities, with long-term socioeconomic consequences. The inability to afford an adequate supply of diapers and incontinence products creates a cycle of financial strain that affects various aspects of life. The following points highlight the financial burden and long-term socioeconomic consequences of the Diaper Divide:

1. Economic Strain on Families

The cost of diapers and incontinence products can be substantial, particularly for low-income families and individuals already facing financial challenges. The need to allocate a significant portion of limited income towards purchasing diapers can leave families with insufficient funds for other essential needs, such as food, housing, healthcare, and education.

2. Implications for Workforce Participation

The financial burden associated with the Diaper Divide can impact workforce participation, particularly for caregivers who are unable to afford an adequate supply of diapers for their infants or individuals with incontinence. This can lead to reduced employment opportunities, increased absenteeism, and diminished career advancement prospects, contributing to long-term financial instability.

3. Cycle of Poverty

Inadequate access to diapers and incontinence products can perpetuate the cycle of poverty. Families and individuals who struggle to afford these basic necessities face increased financial stress, limited educational and employment opportunities, and reduced access to resources that can help break the cycle of poverty and improve their socioeconomic status.

4. Healthcare Costs

Insufficient access to diapers and incontinence products can result in higher healthcare costs. Without proper containment and hygiene, individuals may experience health complications that require medical attention, such as skin infections, urinary tract infections, and related conditions. These additional healthcare expenses further exacerbate the financial burden on individuals and healthcare systems.

“I struggled to figure out financially how I was going to be able to pay for my incontinence products, as I’m a senior citizen on government assistance.”

Lori G.
Aeroflow Urology customer



5. Educational Challenges

The financial strain caused by the Diaper Divide can impact educational opportunities for children. Families who struggle to afford diapers may face difficulties enrolling their children in early childhood education programs or maintaining regular attendance due to concerns about diapering needs. This can potentially hinder children's educational progress and limit their future prospects.

6. Long-Term Socioeconomic Inequality

The Diaper Divide contributes to long-term socioeconomic inequality. Access to clean and adequate diapering supplies is essential for the health, well-being, and development of individuals. When certain populations, such as low-income families or individuals with incontinence, lack access to these resources, it perpetuates existing socioeconomic disparities, limiting opportunities for upward mobility and overall well-being.

Addressing the financial burden and long-term socioeconomic consequences of the Diaper Divide requires a comprehensive approach. **Health plans can play a vital role in collaborating with community organizations, policymakers, and other stakeholders to develop initiatives that alleviate the financial burden by providing affordable diaper options, increasing access to support programs, and advocating for policy changes that recognize diapers and incontinence products as essential healthcare needs.** By addressing the financial challenges associated with the Diaper Divide, health plans can contribute to reducing socioeconomic disparities and promoting a more equitable society.



Factors Contributing to the Diaper Divide

Poverty and Income Disparities

The Diaper Divide exacerbates existing poverty and income disparities, particularly among minority communities. Minority groups often face significant educational, financial, and medical challenges, and these barriers extend to their experiences with diaper need. The following points highlight the role of poverty and income disparities in the Diaper Divide, with a focus on racial disparities:

1. Disproportionate Impact on Minority Communities

Diaper need disproportionately affects minority groups, as evidenced by statistics from the Aeroflow Urology survey. Black, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Native Hawaiian individuals are all significantly impacted by the Diaper Divide.

2. Higher Rates of Disabilities and Poverty

People in minority groups are more likely to have disabilities, which correlates with their higher rates of poverty. Studies have shown that African Americans, in particular, have a higher prevalence of disabilities across different age groups compared to non-Hispanic whites.³ The presence of a disability increases the likelihood of falling into poverty, further intensifying the impact of the Diaper Divide on these communities.⁴

3. Provider Bias and Historical Healthcare Neglect

Historical representation of minority groups not receiving optimal healthcare, coupled with provider bias, poses a significant barrier to addressing diaper-related issues early on. The medical community's negligence towards minority groups has led to disparities in healthcare access and outcomes, thus hindering the ability to identify and address diaper needs effectively.

4. Housing Disparities and Financial Constraints

Housing disparities play a role in perpetuating the Diaper Divide for minority groups. Older Black and Hispanic homeowners are less likely to have paid-off mortgages, and a significant proportion of older Black and Hispanic women live on incomes well below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).⁵ These financial constraints can impact the affordability of incontinence products, particularly for elderly individuals in minority groups.⁶





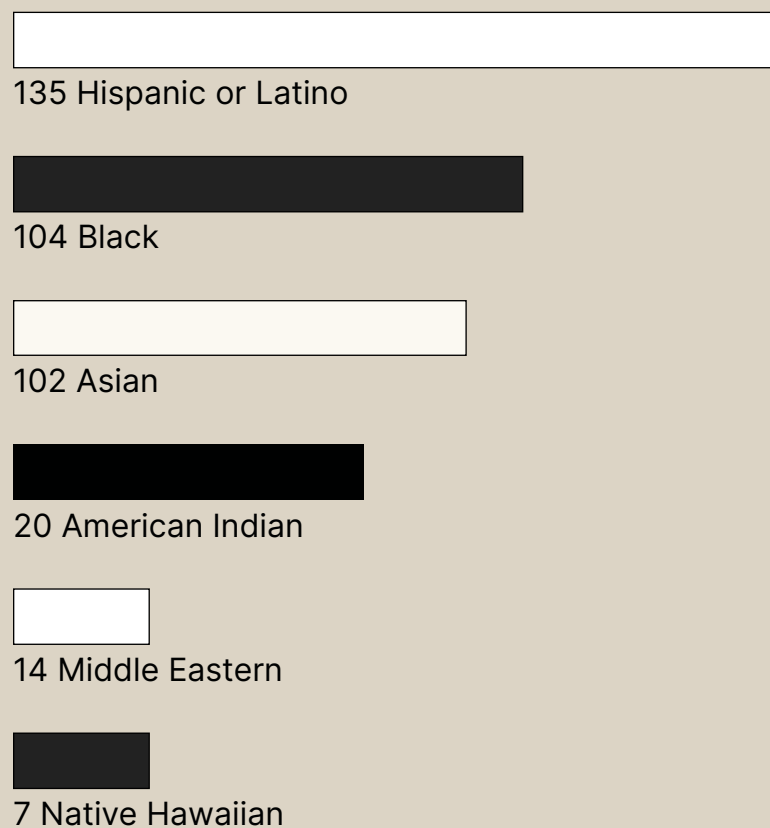
5. Grant Funding Disparities

Nonprofit organizations, including diaper banks, receive varying amounts of grant funding based on race. Nonprofits run by individuals in minority groups often receive less grant money compared to their white counterparts.⁷ This disparity can limit the resources available to minority families and communities, hindering their access to diaper banks and exacerbating the impact of the Diaper Divide.

The intersectionality of poverty, race, and the Diaper Divide underscores the need for targeted interventions and policy changes to address these disparities. **Health plans can collaborate with community organizations, advocate for equitable funding allocations, support initiatives that aim to reduce poverty, improve access to healthcare, and address the specific challenges faced by minority groups.** By addressing poverty and income disparities, health plans can contribute to creating a more equitable society where all individuals have access to the essential resources they need for optimal health and well-being.

Ethnicities of the Diaper Divide

In the Aeroflow Urology study:





“Provider bias and historical representation of minority groups not receiving optimal healthcare is a huge barrier to addressing issues early and often. We see many minority groups not getting the care they need secondary to provider bias/lack of screening or avoiding medical offices altogether because of the historical negligence of the medical community to those minority groups.”

Aleece Fosnight, MSPAS, PA-C, CSC-S, CSE, NCMP, IF, Board-certified Physician Assistant specializing in Sexual Medicine, Women's Health, and Urology

Lack of Diaper Assistance Programs

The lack of diaper assistance programs further exacerbates the challenges faced by individuals, particularly seniors, who require incontinence products. The following points highlight the impact of the absence of such programs:

1. Prevalence of Incontinence among Seniors

Incontinence is prevalent among seniors, with a significant percentage experiencing incidents of incontinence as they age. This includes independent seniors, residential care facility residents, and those receiving home health care. Despite its prevalence, affordable incontinence care remains out of reach for many seniors.⁸

2. Housing Insecurity and Economic Insecurity

Seniors often face housing insecurity, adding to the likelihood that they will be in need of incontinence products. With a substantial number of older adults facing financial challenges, economic insecurity is also a significant concern. In senior housing facilities alone, a considerable amount is spent on urinary incontinence (UI) care annually, highlighting the need for readily available and affordable hygiene products within these communities.⁹

3. Growing Elderly Population

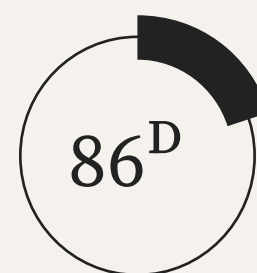
The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that by 2023, 1 in 6 people in the US will be 60 years of age or older. With this increase in the older population, the demand for incontinence products, as well as education, care, and treatment related to incontinence, will significantly rise in geriatric populations, healthcare facilities, and nursing homes.¹⁰

4. Fixed Income and Financial Constraints

Seniors often rely on fixed income payments, and a significant percentage live solely on these payments.¹¹ Economic challenges and limited financial resources force seniors and their caregivers to make difficult choices when it comes to purchasing incontinence products. Balancing essential needs such as groceries, bills, transportation, healthcare, and incontinence products becomes a constant struggle.¹²

“With this increase in the older population, there will be a growing need not only for incontinence products but also for incontinence education, care, and treatment in geriatric populations, healthcare facilities, and nursing homes.”

Susie Gronski, PT, DPT, Licensed Doctor of Physical Therapy, Rehabilitation Practitioner, Michigan-trained Sex Counselor and Educator



Nearly 20% (18.75%) of survey respondents are **responsible for providing incontinence products to senior members** of their households.

5. Medicare Coverage Gap

Medicare does not currently extend coverage for incontinence products. This means that seniors relying on Medicare must bear the full cost of incontinence products, further straining their already limited budgets and contributing to the cycle of poverty and incontinence product need.

The absence of diaper assistance programs leaves seniors vulnerable and unable to access the necessary incontinence products they require for their health and well-being. **Health plans can play a vital role in advocating for the inclusion of incontinence supplies as essential healthcare items, supporting the development of assistance programs, and working towards bridging the gap in coverage for seniors.** By addressing the lack of diaper assistance programs, health plans can alleviate the financial burden on seniors and enhance their quality of life.

Household Income for Those with Incontinence

- 6.72% - Prefer not to answer
- 4.80% - \$200,000+
- 2.04% - \$175,000 - \$199,999
- 3.19% - \$150,000 - \$174,999
- 10.28% - \$100,000 - \$124,999
- 15.90% - \$75,000 - \$99,999
- 18.73% - \$50,000 - \$74,999
- 19.00% - \$25,000 - \$49,999
- 9.46% - \$10,000 - \$24,999
- 4.50% - \$0 - \$9,999



Limited Access to Affordable Diapers

One of the significant challenges faced by adults living with incontinence is limited access to affordable diapers. This issue has a profound impact on their mental, physical, and financial well-being. The following points highlight the consequences of limited access to affordable diapers:

1. Impact on Daily Life

Over 25 million American adults experience temporary or chronic incontinence, and managing this condition is crucial for their ability to function in daily life. However, living in the Diaper Divide makes it nearly impossible for individuals to continue their lives as normal. The lack of access to affordable diapers can lead to mental, physical, and financial issues for adults living with incontinence.¹³

2. Stigma and Shame

Many adults with incontinence, both men and women, face stigma and shame associated with their condition.¹⁴ This leads to a reluctance to discuss their incontinence with family, friends, and healthcare providers. The fear of embarrassment and judgment often leads to self-isolation and a negative impact on mental health.¹⁵

3. Mental Health Challenges

Living with incontinence can have a profound effect on mental health. Feelings of stress, anxiety, depression, and shame are commonly reported among individuals managing incontinence and facing the need for incontinence products. These mental health issues can further exacerbate the symptoms of incontinence, creating a cycle of negative emotional well-being.¹⁶

4. Social Isolation

Adults living with incontinence may avoid social activities due to the fear of accidents or the lack of sufficient diapers. This self-isolation further contributes to feelings of depression, loneliness, and a decreased quality of life. Inadequate access to affordable diapers limits their ability to engage in social interactions and maintain a sense of connection with their community.¹⁷

“Stress and anxiety also affect the pelvic floor muscles which may cause them to involuntarily tense leading to pelvic floor dysfunction which can exacerbate bladder issues.”

Susie Gronski, PT, DPT, Licensed Doctor of Physical Therapy, Rehabilitation Practitioner, Michigan-trained Sex Counselor and Educator

5. Financial Challenges

The cost of incontinence products can place a significant burden on adults living with incontinence, particularly those who are on fixed incomes or have low-wage jobs. The expense of purchasing diapers adds to the already limited budgets of individuals, forcing them to make difficult choices between essential needs and incontinence care. Missed income due to managing incontinence symptoms can further contribute to financial instability and the cycle of poverty.

6. Workforce Impact

Many adults with incontinence are part of the working population and manage their symptoms while on the job. However, the lack of affordable diapers may cause individuals to miss workdays to avoid the embarrassment and challenges of accidents in public. This leads to reduced income and potentially even job loss, further exacerbating the financial strain.¹⁸

The limited access to affordable diapers not only affects the physical comfort and hygiene of adults with incontinence but also has far-reaching implications for their mental well-being, social interactions, and financial stability. **Addressing this issue by providing increased support, awareness, and the development of programs that ensure affordable and accessible incontinence products for all individuals who need them.** By providing affordable diapers, society can alleviate the burden on individuals with incontinence and empower them to lead fulfilling lives without the constraints imposed by the Diaper Divide.

“I’m only 52 years old. [Incontinence] is very embarrassing. It’s expensive to buy these products. When you’re single, it’s hard coming up with money when you don’t make a lot of money.”

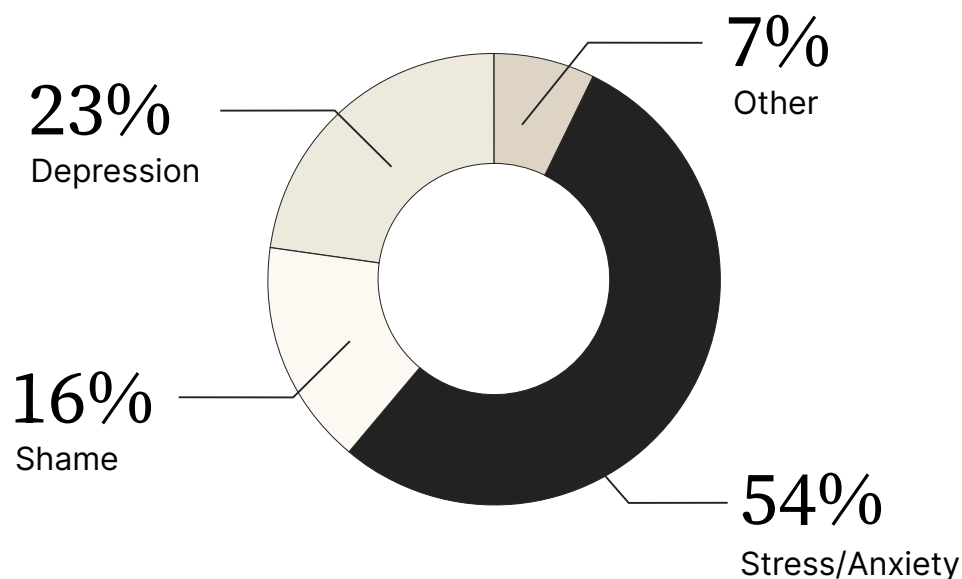
Michael F.
Aeroflow Urology customer

“Being on social security meant not being able to afford to buy the needed bladder protection I needed.”

Teresa R.
Aeroflow Urology customer

Impact of Incontinence on Mental Health

Respondents of the Aeroflow Urology survey report the following feelings when managing incontinence and needing incontinence products.



“There is a tremendous impact on urinary incontinence and mental health. The amount of shame and insecurity felt by these individuals is palpable. There is fear associated with urinary incontinence - *will I smell, will I wet my pants, where is the next restroom?* - and this leads to avoidance and anxiety.”

Aleece Fosnight, MSPAS, PA-C, CSC-S, CSE, NCMP, IF, Board-certified Physician Assistant specializing in Sexual Medicine, Women's Health, and Urology



Addressing the Diaper Divide: Strategies and Solutions

Building Awareness and Advocacy

Addressing the challenges and inequalities surrounding access to diapers requires a collective effort to raise awareness and advocate for change. By building awareness and advocating for policy reforms, individuals and organizations can work together to bridge the gap in diaper access. The following points highlight the importance of building awareness and advocacy:

1. Education and Information

Increasing awareness about the significance of diaper need and its impact on individuals' health and well-being is crucial. Educational campaigns can be conducted to inform the public about the challenges faced by marginalized communities, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. By disseminating accurate information, misconceptions and stigmas surrounding incontinence and diaper needs ensures those suffering from incontinence receive appropriate and timely care.

2. Collaboration with Nonprofits and Organizations

Partnering with nonprofit organizations that focus on addressing diaper need can amplify advocacy efforts. Collaborative initiatives can include raising funds, organizing donation drives, and working together to provide diapers and incontinence products to those in need. By joining forces, these organizations can make a more significant impact and reach a larger audience.

3. Engaging Healthcare Providers

Healthcare providers play a crucial role in addressing diaper need by recognizing its impact on individuals' health and well-being. Advocacy efforts should involve engaging healthcare professionals to raise awareness, provide support, and advocate for policy changes. They can also contribute by integrating discussions about diaper need into patient care and advocating for insurance coverage of incontinence supplies.

4. Policy Reforms

Advocacy efforts should focus on influencing policy changes at local, state, and national levels. This includes advocating for government programs to support individuals in need, such as Medicaid coverage for incontinence supplies, expanding the WIC





(Women, Infants, and Children) program to include diapers, and promoting tax exemptions on diaper purchases. By advocating for policy reforms, the structural barriers that contribute to the diaper divide can be addressed.

5. Promoting Diaper Banks and Assistance Programs

Diaper banks and assistance programs play a vital role in providing diapers to those in need. Increasing awareness about these resources and supporting their efforts can help ensure that individuals facing diaper needs are aware of the available assistance. Encouraging donations, volunteering, and promoting the services of diaper banks can contribute to meeting the demand for diapers in underserved communities.

6. Amplifying Voices

Empowering individuals directly affected by diaper needs to share their stories and experiences can be a powerful tool for advocacy. By giving them a platform to speak out, their voices can shed light on the challenges they face and create a sense of urgency for change. Personal stories can humanize the issue and encourage policymakers, community leaders, and the general public to take action.

Building awareness and advocating for change in the realm of diaper need requires ongoing commitment and collaboration. **By working together, individuals, organizations, and communities can create a movement that drives systemic change, improves access to affordable diapers, and ensures the health, well-being, and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic background or life stage.**

“Our daughter had issues with potty training long before any of her diagnoses [autism and epilepsy]. At the end of 2021, we got kicked out of our home and were practically homeless, jumping from place to place. Money was so tight, we had to discuss whether or not we’d skip meals or diapers. We chose meals.”

Riley L., Aeroflow Urology customer

Supporting Community-based Diaper Banks and Initiatives

Community-based diaper banks and initiatives play a crucial role in addressing diaper need and providing essential support to families and individuals experiencing financial hardship. These grassroots organizations operate on a local level and rely on community support to meet the demand for diapers. Here are some ways to support and strengthen community-based diaper banks and initiatives:

1. Volunteer and Donate

One of the most impactful ways to support diaper banks is by volunteering your time and donating diapers and other necessary supplies. Diaper banks often rely on volunteers to sort and distribute donated items, organize fundraising events, and raise awareness. By donating diapers, wipes, diaper creams, and other hygiene products, you can directly contribute to meeting the needs of families in your community. Check with local [diaper banks](#) to learn about their specific donation and volunteer requirements.

2. Organize Diaper Drives

Coordinate diaper drives in your community, workplace, or school to collect diapers for donation. Spread the word through social media, flyers, and local organizations to encourage others to participate. Diaper drives can be held during specific periods, such as Diaper Need Awareness Week or around holidays when there is often a higher demand for assistance. Collaborate with local businesses, community centers, and religious organizations to serve as collection points for donated diapers.

3. Advocate for Support

Raise awareness about diaper need and advocate for increased support for community-based diaper banks and initiatives. Reach out to local elected officials, community leaders, and organizations to educate them about the issue and its impact on families and individuals. Encourage them to allocate resources and funding to support these initiatives. By mobilizing public support and engaging with decision-makers, you can help create a more favorable environment for diaper banks to thrive.





4. Establish Partnerships

Foster collaborations between community-based diaper banks and other local organizations, such as churches, schools, food banks, and social service agencies. These partnerships can help expand the reach of diaper banks and ensure a more comprehensive approach to supporting families in need. By working together, organizations can share resources, exchange information, and collaborate on initiatives that address the underlying causes of diaper need.

5. Fundraise and Provide Financial Support

Financial contributions are vital for the sustainability and growth of community-based diaper banks. Organize fundraising events, such as charity runs, auctions, or online crowdfunding campaigns, to generate financial support for these initiatives. Encourage local businesses, foundations, and individuals to make monetary donations or sponsor specific programs and events. Financial support can help diaper banks purchase diapers in bulk, cover operational costs, and implement additional services, such as diaper education programs or distribution to specific populations in need.

6. Spread the Word

Utilize your networks, social media platforms, and community connections to raise awareness about the work of community-based diaper banks. You can do this by sharing their stories and information about their ongoing needs. By amplifying their message, you can help attract more community members, businesses, and organizations to get involved and provide support.

Supporting community-based diaper banks and initiatives goes beyond immediate assistance. It contributes to the overall well-being and stability of families and individuals facing diaper need; therefore,empowering them to thrive and participate fully in their communities. By coming together and supporting these local initiatives, we can make a significant difference in ensuring that every child and adult has access to clean and affordable diapers and therefore has the dignity they deserve.

Collaborating with Public Assistance Programs

Collaboration with public assistance programs is essential in addressing the Diaper Divide and ensuring that individuals and families in need have access to affordable diapers and incontinence products. By working together, we can create systemic changes and improve the support provided to those facing diaper need. Here are two key areas of collaboration with public assistance programs:

1. Federally Categorize Incontinence Products as Medical Necessities

A crucial step in closing the Diaper Divide is to advocate for the federal coverage of diapers and incontinence products for all individuals experiencing a need. It would enable children, adults, and seniors on Medicaid to receive incontinence products at no cost. Furthermore, federal coverage inclusive of Medicare would extend its coverage for these supplies, ensuring that seniors with incontinence can access them through their healthcare plans. This change in classification may also prompt government assistance programs to revise their restrictions on eligible purchases, enabling individuals in these programs to use their allocated funds to buy incontinence products. By collaborating with public assistance programs and advocating for this federal bill, we can eliminate diaper scarcity and provide vital support to those in need.

2. Increase Assistance Program Funding and Create Better Programs

Another critical aspect of collaboration with public assistance programs is to advocate for increased funding and the development of more efficient programs. State-run assistance programs should allocate a larger portion of their resources to initiatives that help low-income families and individuals with disabilities afford basic necessities, including diapers and incontinence products. Additionally, states can consider lowering their income eligibility requirements for families applying for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance programs. This would provide greater financial support to families facing the Diaper Divide.

Diaper banks are an important component of assistance programs, but they often lack the necessary funding to meet the demand for incontinence products. They may also have limited product variety, which can hinder their ability to cater to individual



needs. Collaborating with public assistance programs to secure federal funding for diaper banks would enhance their efficiency and capacity to provide a wider range of products to more families in need. By strengthening and supporting diaper banks, we can contribute to closing the Diaper Divide and ensuring that no one is left without the necessary supplies.

By collaborating with public assistance programs, advocating for policy changes, and securing adequate funding, we can create a more comprehensive and effective support system for individuals and families facing the Diaper Divide. Together, we can bridge the gap, alleviate financial burdens, and promote the overall well-being and dignity of those affected by diaper need.



“Aeroflow remains committed to ensuring all vulnerable Americans have access to these essential products - not just our patients. As a company whose history is rooted in taking care of family, we go the extra mile with insurance and the government to bring awareness and attention to unintended gaps in care.”

Mindi Walker, Aeroflow
Healthcare Government Relations

Expanding Insurance Coverage for Diapers

One important avenue to address the Diaper Divide is to advocate for the expansion of insurance coverage for diapers and incontinence products. By working with insurance providers and policymakers, we can ensure that these essential items are recognized as integral components of healthcare and receive the necessary coverage. Here are key points to consider when advocating for expanded insurance coverage:

1. Recognizing Diapers as Medical Necessities

Diapers and incontinence products are not merely convenience items but crucial healthcare necessities for individuals with incontinence issues. It is essential to educate insurance providers and policymakers about the health risks associated with untreated incontinence and the negative impact of limited access to diapers. By emphasizing the medical nature of these products, we can highlight the importance of insurance coverage in maintaining individuals' health, dignity, and overall quality of life.

2. Collaboration with Insurance Providers

Collaborating with insurance companies is vital to expand coverage for diapers. Engaging in discussions with insurers and demonstrating the benefits of covering incontinence products can lead to policy changes. By highlighting the potential cost savings resulting from proactive management of incontinence, including reduced hospitalizations and associated healthcare expenses, we can make a compelling case for insurance providers to include diapers as part of their coverage plans.

3. Policy Advocacy

Advocating for policy changes at the state and federal levels is crucial for expanding insurance coverage for diapers. This involves working with legislators, policymakers, and relevant government agencies to push for the inclusion of diapers as reimbursable healthcare expenses. By raising awareness about the impact of the Diaper Divide and the importance of insurance coverage, we can drive policy reforms that benefit individuals with incontinence and their families.

4. Collaboration with Healthcare Professionals

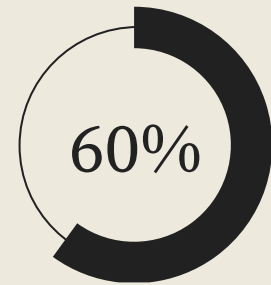
Healthcare professionals play a key role in advocating for expanded insurance coverage for diapers. Working together with doctors, nurses, and other medical practitioners, we can leverage their expertise and influence to communicate the medical necessity of diapers. Medical professionals can provide valuable insights and data to support the case for insurance coverage and collaborate with insurers to develop coverage policies that align with best practices in incontinence care.



5. Public Awareness and Support

Building public awareness and support is essential for generating momentum behind the push for expanded insurance coverage. Engaging with the community, sharing personal stories, and highlighting the impact of limited access to diapers can mobilize public opinion. By encouraging individuals to voice their concerns to insurance providers, policymakers, and elected representatives, we can create a groundswell of support that compels action.

Expanding insurance coverage for diapers requires a multifaceted approach that involves collaboration with insurance providers, policymakers, healthcare professionals, and the public. By advocating for the recognition of diapers as medical necessities, engaging in policy discussions, and raising public awareness, we can pave the way for a more inclusive and comprehensive healthcare system that supports individuals and families in need of diapers and incontinence products.



60% admit their healthcare provider has not provided any assistance in acquiring products.





The Role of Health Plans

Recognizing Diapers as a Health Necessity

One of the key steps in addressing the Diaper Divide is to emphasize the importance of recognizing diapers as a health necessity rather than a convenience item. By raising awareness about the medical and psychological implications of untreated incontinence and the critical role of diapers in managing the condition, we can promote a shift in perception and policy. Here are important points to consider when advocating for the recognition of diapers as a health necessity:

1. Health Implications of Untreated Incontinence

It is crucial to highlight the detrimental effects of untreated incontinence on individuals' physical and mental health. Incontinence can lead to skin infections, urinary tract infections, and other complications if not properly managed. Additionally, the emotional and psychological toll of living with incontinence can significantly impact an individual's well-being, self-esteem, and overall quality of life.

2. Preventive Approach to Healthcare

Recognizing diapers as a health necessity aligns with a preventive approach to healthcare. By providing individuals with access to affordable diapers, we can proactively manage incontinence and prevent or minimize associated health issues. This preventive approach reduces the need for more costly interventions and medical treatments down the line, resulting in overall cost savings for healthcare systems and insurers.

3. Dignity and Quality of Life

Diapers play a crucial role in preserving an individual's dignity and enhancing their quality of life. Access to clean and effective diapers enables individuals with incontinence to participate fully in daily activities, maintain social connections, and engage in work or educational pursuits without fear of embarrassment or discomfort. Recognizing diapers as a health necessity is essential for upholding the rights and dignity of individuals living with incontinence.

4. Impact on Caregivers and Families

It is important to acknowledge the significant burden placed on caregivers and families when individuals with incontinence lack access to diapers. Without proper diaper coverage, caregivers often struggle to manage their loved ones' incontinence needs, leading to increased stress, decreased quality of care, and potential negative health outcomes for both the individual and the caregiver. Recognizing diapers as a health necessity supports not only the well-being of the individuals themselves but also the overall health and resilience of their caregivers and families.





5. Policy Reforms and Insurance Coverage

Advocacy efforts should focus on policy reforms and the inclusion of diapers as reimbursable healthcare expenses in insurance coverage. By working with policymakers, healthcare professionals, and insurance providers, we can highlight the medical necessity of diapers and push for policy changes that ensure access to affordable diapers for all individuals with incontinence. This includes expanding coverage under public assistance programs such as Medicaid and Medicare, as well as advocating for private insurance plans to include diapers as essential medical supplies.

6. Education and Awareness Campaigns

Educating the public, healthcare professionals, policymakers, and insurers about the health implications of untreated incontinence and the necessity of diapers is vital. Conducting awareness campaigns, sharing personal stories, and providing evidence-based information can help dispel misconceptions, reduce stigma, and foster a greater understanding of the importance of diapers in maintaining health and well-being.

By recognizing diapers as a health necessity, we can foster a more compassionate and inclusive society that prioritizes the needs of individuals with incontinence. Through advocacy, policy reforms, and public education, we can work towards ensuring universal access to affordable and high-quality diapers for all those who require them, ultimately closing the Diaper Divide and improving the overall health and well-being of individuals and communities.

Integrating Diaper Support into Health Plan Benefits

A crucial step in addressing the Diaper Divide is the integration of diaper support into health plan benefits. By recognizing the importance of diapers as a vital component of healthcare for individuals with incontinence, health plans can play a significant role in ensuring access to these essential products. Here are some key points to consider when advocating for the integration of diaper support into health plan benefits:

1. Comprehensive Healthcare Coverage

Health plans should recognize that incontinence care is a fundamental aspect of comprehensive healthcare. By including coverage for diapers, health plans can ensure that individuals with incontinence have access to the necessary supplies to manage their condition effectively. This coverage should extend to all age groups, including children, adults, and seniors.

2. Medical Necessity

Emphasizing the medical necessity of diapers is crucial for their inclusion in health plan benefits. Diapers are not merely convenience items; they are essential medical supplies that play a vital role in maintaining hygiene, preventing complications, and improving the overall health and well-being of individuals with incontinence. Health plans should recognize this medical necessity and provide coverage accordingly.

3. Preventive Care Approach

Integrating diaper support into health plan benefits aligns with a preventive care approach. By ensuring access to diapers, health plans can help prevent health issues associated with untreated incontinence, such as skin infections and urinary tract infections. This proactive approach to healthcare leads to better overall health outcomes, reduced healthcare costs, and improved quality of life for individuals with incontinence.

4. Collaboration with Healthcare Providers

Health plans should collaborate closely with healthcare providers, including urologists, primary care physicians, and specialists in geriatric care, to develop comprehensive coverage guidelines for diaper support. This collaboration can ensure that coverage aligns with medical recommendations and that individuals receive the appropriate type and quantity of diapers based on their specific needs.

“Aeroflow is actively engaged with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and Congress to address these issues - including the ambitious goal of advocating for full coverage of incontinence products for every Medicare recipient in the United States.”

Mindi Walker, Aeroflow
Healthcare Government Relations



5. Tailored Coverage for Different Populations

Diaper support should be tailored to the unique needs of different populations, including children, adults, and seniors. Health plans should consider factors such as size, absorbency level, and brand preferences when determining coverage to ensure that individuals receive diapers that meet their specific requirements. This personalized approach can enhance comfort, dignity, and overall effectiveness in managing incontinence.

6. Reimbursement Options

Health plans should offer flexible reimbursement options for diapers to accommodate the diverse needs of individuals. This may include direct reimbursement for purchased diapers or the provision of a designated supply of diapers through preferred suppliers or contracted pharmacies. By offering various reimbursement options, health plans can improve access and convenience for individuals in need.

7. Education and Support

Health plans should invest in educational resources and support programs to empower individuals with incontinence and their caregivers. These resources can include information on proper diaper usage, skin care, and strategies for managing incontinence effectively. Additionally, health plans should collaborate with healthcare providers to offer counseling, guidance, and access to specialized services such as pelvic floor rehabilitation.

By integrating diaper support into health plan benefits, we can ensure that individuals with incontinence have equitable access to the supplies they need for optimal care. This integration not only improves the health and well-being of individuals but also leads to long-term cost savings by preventing complications and reducing the need for more extensive medical interventions. **Through collaborative efforts between health plans, healthcare providers, policymakers, and advocacy organizations, we can pave the way for a more inclusive and comprehensive healthcare system that addresses the needs of individuals with incontinence.**

Collaborating with Providers and Community Organizations

Addressing the Diaper Divide requires collaborative efforts between healthcare providers and community organizations. By working together, these entities can combine their resources, expertise, and reach to effectively support individuals in need of diapers and incontinence supplies. Here are key points to consider when advocating for collaboration between providers and community organizations:

1. Provider Engagement

Healthcare providers, including physicians, nurses, and specialists, play a crucial role in identifying individuals who require diaper support. It is essential to engage providers and raise awareness about the challenges faced by individuals with incontinence. This can be achieved through educational initiatives, training programs, and professional development opportunities that equip providers with the knowledge and tools to address the diaper needs of their patients.

2. Referral Networks

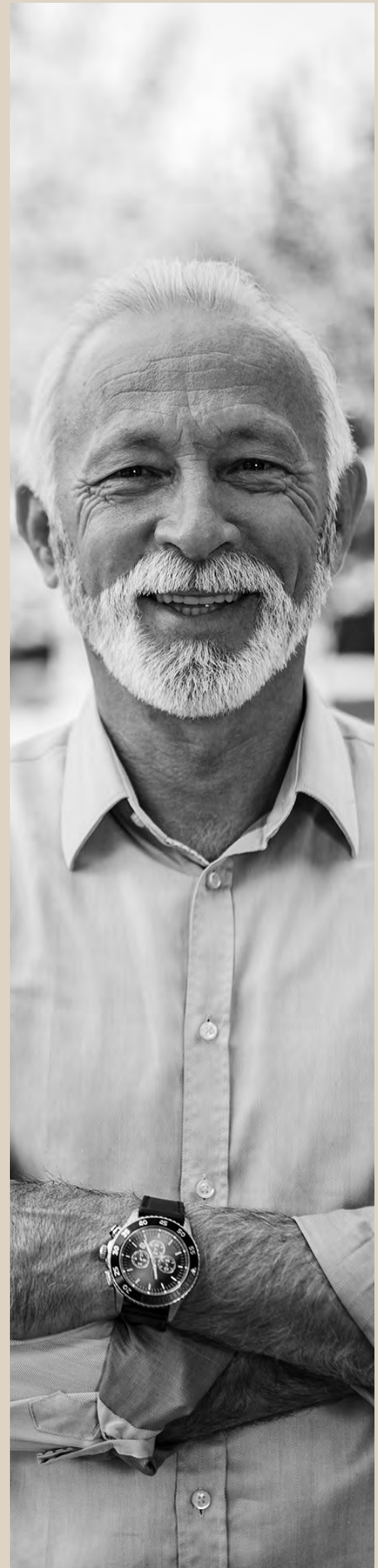
Establishing referral networks between healthcare providers and community organizations can streamline access to diaper support. Providers should be aware of local community organizations, such as diaper banks, social service agencies, and nonprofit organizations, that can provide assistance to individuals in need. By referring patients to these organizations, providers can ensure that their patients receive the necessary support and resources.

3. Resource Sharing

Collaboration between providers and community organizations should involve the sharing of information and resources. Providers can contribute their expertise in diagnosing and managing incontinence, while community organizations can provide insights into the specific needs and challenges faced by individuals in the community. This exchange of knowledge can inform the development of comprehensive support programs and services.

4. Training and Education

Community organizations can play a vital role in providing training and education to healthcare providers on topics related to incontinence and diaper support. This can include workshops, webinars, and educational materials that enhance providers' understanding of the impact of incontinence on individuals' health and well-being. By improving providers' knowledge, they can better advocate for their patients' diaper needs and facilitate access to appropriate resources.





5. Collaborative Initiatives

Providers and community organizations can collaborate on initiatives aimed at addressing the Diaper Divide. This can involve joint fundraising efforts, awareness campaigns, and advocacy activities to highlight the importance of diaper support and push for policy changes at the local, state, and national levels. By joining forces, providers and community organizations can amplify their impact and create lasting change.

6. Data Sharing and Research

Collaboration between providers and community organizations can facilitate data sharing and research initiatives to better understand the extent of the Diaper Divide and its impact on individuals and communities. By collecting and analyzing data, stakeholders can identify gaps in service provision, evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, and advocate for evidence-based policies and programs.

7. Holistic Support

Collaboration should extend beyond the provision of diapers and incontinence supplies. Providers and community organizations can work together to develop holistic support programs that address the physical, emotional, and social aspects of living with incontinence. This can include access to counseling services, support groups, caregiver education, and resources for managing the psychological impact of incontinence.

By fostering collaboration between providers and community organizations, we can create a comprehensive support network that addresses the diverse needs of individuals facing the Diaper Divide. Through shared expertise, resources, and a collective commitment to improving access to diapers and incontinence supplies, we can make significant strides in ensuring the health, dignity, and quality of life for those affected by incontinence.

Educating Members and Healthcare Professionals

One of the significant barriers to integrating diaper support into health plan benefits is the lack of awareness among both patients and healthcare professionals regarding the availability of these benefits. Addressing this barrier requires focused educational efforts to ensure that individuals in need of diaper support and healthcare providers are aware of the existing resources and options. Here are some key strategies to enhance awareness and understanding:

1. Public Awareness Campaigns

Launching targeted public awareness campaigns is crucial to inform individuals about the availability of diaper support through health plan benefits. These campaigns should utilize various channels, such as social media, community events, and healthcare facilities, to disseminate information. By raising awareness about the benefits and eligibility criteria, these campaigns can bridge the knowledge gap and encourage individuals to explore and access the support they require.

2. Member Education

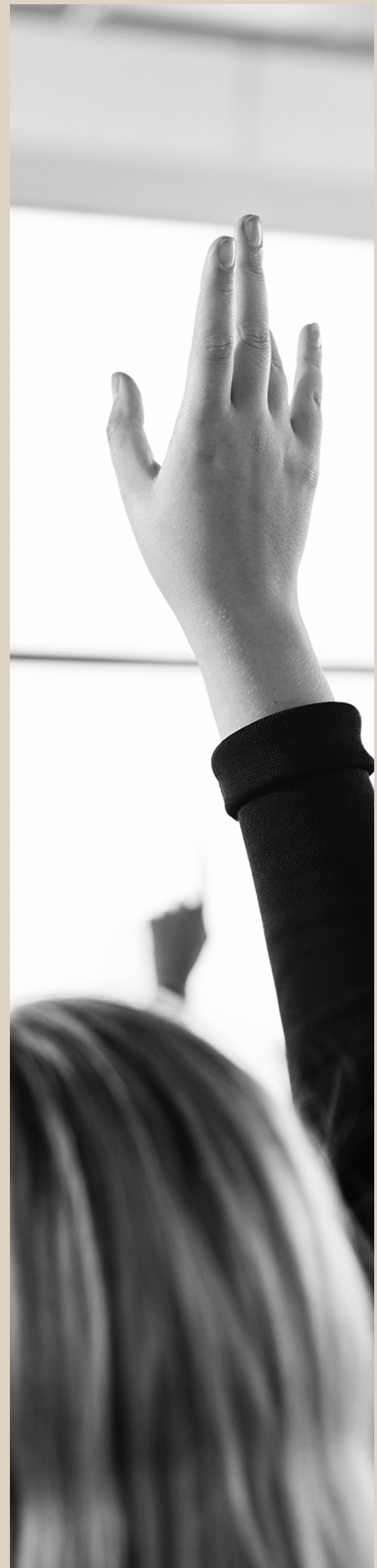
Developing educational materials and resources specifically tailored to members of health plans is essential. These resources should outline the available diaper support benefits, the process for accessing them, and the documentation required. Distributing educational materials through member portals, newsletters, and informational sessions can ensure that members are well-informed about their entitlements and can advocate for their needs.

3. Healthcare Professional Training

Healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, and allied healthcare providers, need to be educated about the inclusion of diaper support in health plan benefits. Training programs and continuing education initiatives should highlight the importance of addressing incontinence and the benefits of diaper support. By ensuring that healthcare professionals are aware of the available resources, they can proactively discuss and recommend diaper support to eligible patients.

4. Collaborative Efforts with Healthcare Organizations

Collaborating with healthcare organizations, such as hospitals, clinics, and medical associations, can amplify the educational efforts. These organizations can integrate information about diaper support into their existing training programs and provide resources to healthcare professionals. By leveraging established networks and channels of communication, this collaboration can effectively disseminate knowledge and create a culture of awareness and support.





5. Provider-Patient Communication

Encouraging open and proactive discussions between healthcare providers and patients is crucial. Healthcare professionals should inquire about incontinence issues during routine examinations and screenings, ensuring that patients are comfortable discussing their symptoms. By actively raising the topic, healthcare providers can inform patients about available support options, including diaper benefits, and guide them towards appropriate resources.

6. Leveraging Technology

Embracing technology can enhance educational efforts. Developing digital platforms, mobile applications, or online resources that provide comprehensive information about diaper support benefits and connect individuals with relevant assistance programs can significantly improve accessibility and awareness. These technological solutions can be integrated into existing healthcare systems and patient portals, facilitating seamless access to information and support.

7. Partnerships with Community Organizations

Collaborating with community organizations that cater to vulnerable populations, such as senior centers, disability support groups, and community health clinics, can extend the reach of educational initiatives. These organizations have established relationships with the target audience and can assist in disseminating information about diaper support benefits. By tapping into their networks, educational messages can reach a broader audience and ensure that those who may benefit the most are informed about available resources.

By addressing the barrier of awareness through focused educational initiatives, we can bridge the knowledge gap among patients and healthcare professionals. **Increased awareness of diaper support benefits can empower individuals to advocate for themselves and enable healthcare providers to proactively discuss and recommend these resources to eligible patients.** Ultimately, comprehensive education plays a pivotal role in ensuring that individuals are aware of their entitlements and can access the support they need.



Conclusion

Reiterating the Importance of Addressing the Diaper Divide

The findings from the comprehensive survey conducted by Aeroflow Urology highlight the urgent need to address the Diaper Divide and its far-reaching consequences. The research, which involved over 1,000 individuals living with incontinence or caring for someone with the condition, exposes the significant impact that the lack of access to affordable incontinence products has on various segments of the population.

1. Affordability Challenges:

Almost 70% of the respondents have been unable to afford diapers, while an alarming 72% continuously struggle to purchase incontinence products due to their high cost. This financial burden places an immense strain on individuals and families already facing numerous challenges.

2. Difficult Trade-Offs

More than half of those surveyed (66%) have faced the heart-wrenching dilemma of choosing between buying incontinence products and meeting other basic necessities such as food, electricity, and more on a frequent basis. This indicates the immense impact of the Diaper Divide on the overall well-being and quality of life of affected individuals and their families.

3. Extended Product Use and Sacrifices

Over 40% of respondents reported having to reuse incontinence products for an extended period because they simply could not afford to buy new ones. Additionally, nearly half of the respondents (48%) have had to limit their family members' fluid or food intake due to the financial strain of purchasing incontinence products. These sacrifices highlight the dire consequences of the lack of affordable access to these essential items.

4. Social Exclusion and Missed Opportunities:

The financial constraints imposed by the Diaper Divide have forced 53% of respondents to miss out on important events and activities due to their inability to afford an adequate supply of diapers. This exclusion further perpetuates feelings of isolation, frustration, and a sense of being left behind.





5. Health Complications

Shockingly, more than one-third (43%) of those surveyed have experienced more severe health complications as a result of not having enough products to properly manage their incontinence. Of those, a staggering 70% reported experiencing complications such as infections, urinary tract infections (UTIs), increased incontinence, or skin irritation. This illustrates the profound impact of the Diaper Divide on individuals' health outcomes and well-being.

6. Mental Health Impact

The burden of needing diapers or caring for someone with incontinence has taken a toll on the mental health of those affected. Approximately two-thirds (60%) of respondents admitted that their mental health has been negatively impacted, with 40% reporting increased levels of stress and anxiety. These statistics underscore the urgent need for comprehensive support and resources to address the mental health challenges associated with incontinence.

7. Lack of Support from Healthcare Providers

Despite the tremendous challenges faced by respondents, the survey reveals that healthcare providers have often failed to offer adequate assistance in acquiring incontinence products. A concerning 60% reported that their healthcare providers had not provided any support in accessing these essential items. Additionally, 55% stated that they had received no resources to help manage the care of someone with incontinence. This significant gap in support exacerbates the difficulties faced by individuals and caregivers.

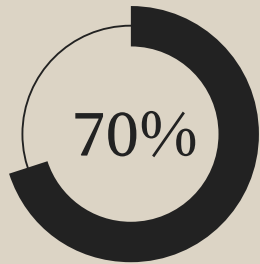
8. Demand for More Resources

Almost 80% of those surveyed expressed a strong desire for additional resources to help navigate the challenges of incontinence and bladder problems. This underscores the importance of developing comprehensive programs, support networks, and initiatives to address the diverse needs of individuals and families impacted by incontinence.

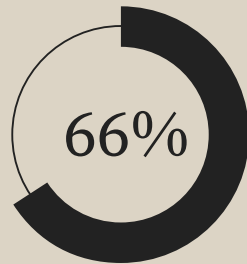
The findings from this survey underscore the urgent need for concerted efforts from policymakers, healthcare professionals, community organizations, and society as a whole to bridge the Diaper Divide. By recognizing the profound impact of the lack of access to affordable incontinence products, we can work towards comprehensive solutions that ensure the health, dignity, and well-being of all individuals affected by incontinence. **It is imperative that we prioritize the development of accessible resources, advocacy for policy changes, and collaborative efforts to eliminate the barriers imposed by the Diaper Divide and create a more equitable future for everyone.**

Aeroflow Urology Study

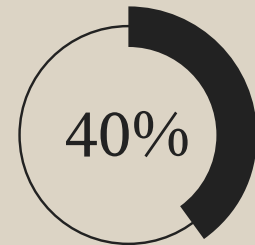
Aeroflow Urology conducted a survey of **over 1,000 people living with incontinence** or caring for someone who had the condition. This new research showcases how the Diaper Divide affects different groups of people and demonstrates how incontinence products need is amplified by the current issues in the US. Our Findings:



70% of respondents have **not been able to afford diapers**, while **72% continuously struggle** to buy products due to affordability.



66% of those surveyed reported that they have had to **choose between buying incontinence products and other necessities**, such as food, electricity, etc. on a frequent basis.



40% of respondents stated they have had to **reuse products for an extended period of time** because they could not afford to buy new ones.

48%

of respondents **limit food or fluid intake** for a member of their household in an attempt to save incontinence products.

53%

stated they have had to **miss out on important events and activities** because they couldn't afford enough diapers for the occasion.

2 in 3

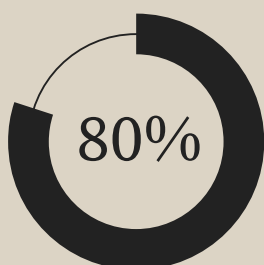
admitted their **mental health has been negatively impacted** by needing diapers or caring for someone with incontinence, with **40% stating their stress and anxiety levels have increased**.

1 in 3

shared they have **experienced a more severe health complication** because they did not have enough products to properly handle their incontinence, with **70% stating those complications involved an infection, UTI, increased incontinence or skin irritation**.

2 in 3

reported their **healthcare provider had not provided any assistance** in acquiring products, and **55% stated they have received zero resources** to help manage caring for someone with incontinence.



Almost 80% of those surveyed **wish there were more resources available to help them navigate incontinence** and bladder problems and caring for someone with these issues.

Encouraging Health Plans to Take Proactive Steps

To effectively address the Diaper Divide and improve the lives of individuals affected by incontinence, it is crucial to engage health plans and encourage them to take proactive steps in providing support and coverage for incontinence products. By recognizing the impact of incontinence on overall health and well-being, health plans can play a pivotal role in ensuring access to these essential items for their members.

1. Raising Awareness

Health plans should prioritize raising awareness among their members and healthcare professionals about the importance of addressing the Diaper Divide. By disseminating information through educational materials, online resources, and targeted campaigns, health plans can help bridge the knowledge gap and highlight the significance of affordable access to incontinence products as a health necessity.

2. Coverage Expansion

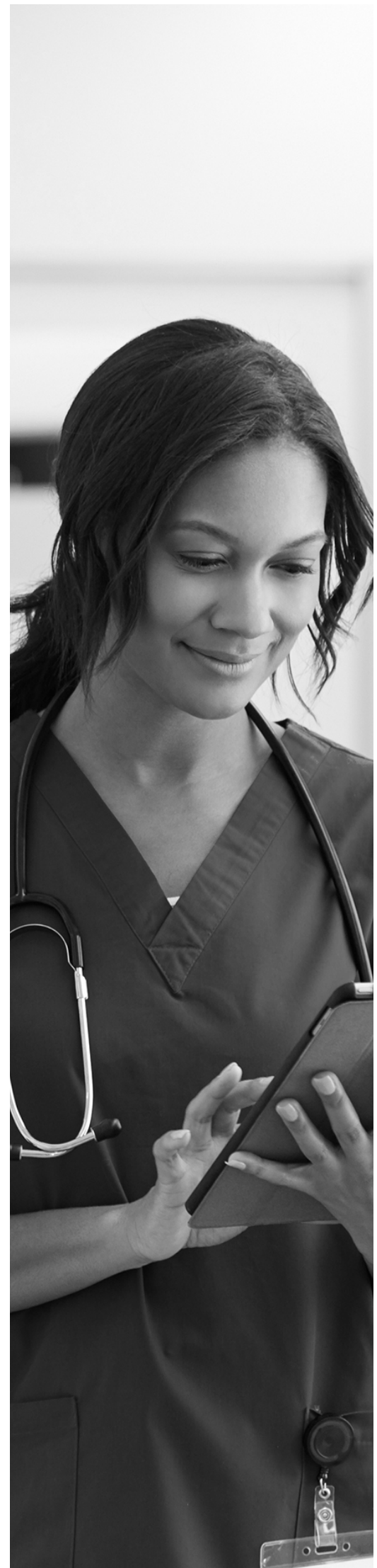
Health plans should reassess their coverage policies to include incontinence products as an essential component of healthcare. By recognizing the medical necessity of these products, health plans can expand their coverage to include a wide range of incontinence supplies, including diapers, pads, and related accessories. This expansion should encompass individuals of all ages, including children, adults, and seniors, to ensure comprehensive support for those affected by incontinence.

3. Collaborating with Providers

Health plans should foster collaborative relationships with healthcare providers to ensure they are informed about the available coverage options for incontinence products. This collaboration can involve providing clear guidelines, training, and resources to healthcare professionals to help them identify and support individuals in need of incontinence products. By actively involving healthcare providers, health plans can enhance the coordination of care and ensure a seamless process for accessing necessary supplies.

4. Simplifying Reimbursement Processes

Health plans should streamline the reimbursement processes for incontinence products to reduce administrative burdens and improve accessibility. Simplifying the documentation requirements, expediting reimbursement timelines, and establishing clear communication channels between members, providers, and health plans can help remove barriers and facilitate timely access to incontinence supplies.





5. Tailoring Benefits

Health plans should consider tailoring their benefits to meet the unique needs of individuals with incontinence. This could involve offering different product options, including various sizes, absorbencies, and brands, to accommodate individual preferences and requirements. Additionally, health plans can explore innovative approaches such as home delivery programs or partnerships with local diaper banks to enhance convenience and accessibility for their members.

6. Member Education and Support

Health plans should prioritize member education and support programs to empower individuals and caregivers in managing incontinence. This can include providing educational materials, access to support groups, online resources, and helplines staffed by knowledgeable professionals. By offering comprehensive support, health plans can assist individuals and caregivers in navigating the challenges of incontinence, improving their overall well-being and quality of life.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

Health plans should establish mechanisms to monitor the impact of their efforts in addressing the Diaper Divide. This can involve regular evaluation of coverage utilization, member satisfaction surveys, and collaboration with community organizations and advocacy groups to gain insights into emerging needs and potential areas for improvement. By actively monitoring their initiatives, health plans can refine their strategies and ensure ongoing effectiveness in addressing the Diaper Divide.

By encouraging health plans to take proactive steps, we can create a healthcare system that recognizes the importance of addressing the Diaper Divide and provides comprehensive support for individuals and families affected by incontinence. **Together, we can foster a more inclusive and equitable healthcare landscape that prioritizes the well-being and dignity of all individuals.**

Emphasizing the Potential Positive Impact on Health Outcomes

Addressing the Diaper Divide and ensuring access to incontinence products goes beyond providing a basic necessity; it has the potential to significantly impact health outcomes for individuals affected by incontinence. By recognizing the interconnectedness between incontinence management and overall health, it becomes evident that proactive measures to bridge the gap can yield substantial benefits. Here are some key points to emphasize the potential positive impact on health outcomes:

1. Prevention of Complications

Access to appropriate incontinence products plays a crucial role in preventing potential health complications. Without access to quality products, individuals may resort to prolonged use of inadequate or unsanitary alternatives, increasing the risk of infections, urinary tract infections (UTIs), skin irritation, and other related complications. By addressing the Diaper Divide and ensuring access to proper supplies, health plans can contribute to preventing these avoidable health issues and promote overall well-being.

2. Enhanced Hygiene and Skin Health

Maintaining good hygiene and skin health is essential for individuals with incontinence. Inadequate access to incontinence products can lead to improper hygiene practices and prolonged exposure to moisture, which can contribute to skin breakdown, infections, and discomfort. By providing access to high-quality incontinence products, health plans can help individuals maintain better hygiene, reduce the risk of skin-related complications, and improve their overall comfort and quality of life.

3. Improved Mental Health and Well-being

Living with incontinence can have a significant impact on an individual's mental health and well-being. The stress, anxiety, and embarrassment associated with inadequate incontinence management can lead to social isolation, reduced self-esteem, and decreased overall quality of life. By addressing the Diaper Divide and ensuring access to appropriate incontinence products, health plans can alleviate the psychological burden, enhance self-confidence, and promote better mental health outcomes for individuals and their caregivers.





4. Better Management of Underlying Conditions

Incontinence is often associated with underlying medical conditions such as bladder dysfunction, neurological disorders, or age-related factors. Effective management of incontinence through access to appropriate products can contribute to better control of these underlying conditions. By reducing episodes of incontinence and providing individuals with the necessary tools for effective management, health plans can positively impact the overall management of related health conditions and promote better health outcomes.

5. Enhanced Quality of Life

Adequate access to incontinence products can significantly enhance the quality of life for individuals and their caregivers. By ensuring that individuals can engage in daily activities, attend social events, and maintain an active lifestyle without fear or embarrassment, health plans can contribute to a greater sense of independence, dignity, and overall well-being. This, in turn, can lead to improved social connections, increased participation in meaningful activities, and a higher overall quality of life.

6. Long-Term Cost Savings

While addressing the Diaper Divide and expanding coverage for incontinence products may require initial investment, the potential long-term cost savings should not be overlooked. By proactively providing access to incontinence products, health plans can help prevent avoidable health complications, reduce emergency room visits, hospital admissions, and the need for more extensive medical interventions. These cost savings can be significant, ultimately resulting in more efficient healthcare utilization and improved overall healthcare system sustainability.

By emphasizing the potential positive impact on health outcomes, health plans can recognize the long-term value of addressing the Diaper Divide. **By investing in adequate coverage and support for incontinence products, health plans have the opportunity to improve health outcomes, enhance quality of life, and promote a more inclusive and equitable healthcare system for all individuals affected by incontinence.**

All references cited throughout this playbook can be found here.



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