UnitedHealth Premium Geographic area

Additional UnitedHealth Premium® methodology documents are located on **unitedhealthpremium.uhc.com.**

Overview

The UnitedHealth Premium efficient quality care and total cost of care evaluations compare a physician's performance with that of physicians in the same Premium specialty and geographic area. Geographic areas are specialty-specific and assigned based on the physician's Premium specialty and primary place of service ZIP code. Geographic areas are established through a 4-step process.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Prepare physician practice location information	**Determine physician practice location anchor points**	**Define geographic areas**	**Assign geographic areas**

Step 1: Prepare physician practice location information

A **Determine unique physician practice locations**
All Premium-eligible physician practice locations are geolocated using address geocoding. Each unique practice location is used only once, even if multiple physicians share the same location.

B **Assign market types to ZIP codes**
All ZIP codes are assigned a Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) market type of large metro, metro, micro, rural or counties with extreme access considerations (CEAC).

C **Separate physicians into 2 subsets**
Physicians and unique practice location data are placed into 1 of 2 subsets based on Premium specialty and CMS accessibility standards.

Subset	Premium specialty	Access standard in miles
Primary care	Family medicine	Large metro–5, metro–10, micro–20, rural-30, CEAC–60
	Internal medicine	
	Pediatrics	

Subset	Premium specialty	Access standard in miles
Specialists	Allergy	Large metro–15, metro–30, micro–60, rural–75, CEAC–110
	Cardiology	
	Ear, nose and throat	
	Endocrinology	
	Gastroenterology	
	General surgery	
	Nephrology	
	Neurology	
	Neurosurgery, orthopedics and spine	
	Obstetrics and gynecology	
	Pulmonology	
	Rheumatology	
	Urology	

Step 2: Determine physician practice location anchor points

A **Identify and map unique physician practice location clusters**
Using the Esri ArcGIS Pro Density-Based Clustering tool and the unique physician practice location and ZIP code data from step 1, identify statistically significant clusters of physician practice locations for each physician subset.
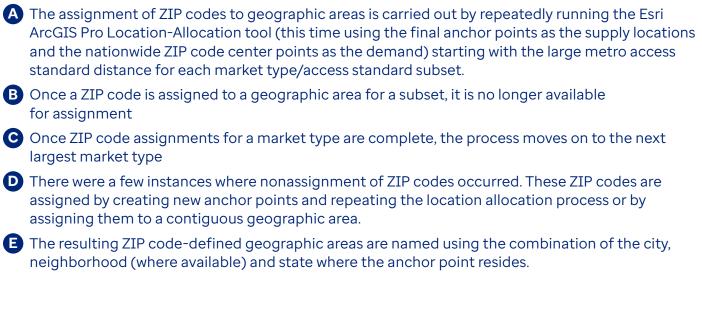
B **Determine candidate anchor points**
For clusters located in large metro, metro and micro market types, the Esri ArcGIS Pro Mean Centers tool is used to calculate the geospatial "average" or mean location of the cluster. For rural and CEAC market types, the nearest ZIP code center point is identified for all unique physician practice locations. These ZIP code center points are appended to the mean centers calculated for the large metro, metro and micro clusters to create the full set of candidate anchor points.

C **Determine final anchor points**
Using the Esri ArcGIS Pro Location-Allocation tool, the final set of anchor points is selected. The tool uses an intelligent nationwide routable street network to allocate demand population locations to supply locations most efficiently based on driving distance. The process is run against each market type/access standard subset of candidate anchor points. The result is a final set of the minimum number of anchor points required to maximally cover the unique physician practice locations within the applicable access standards.

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Step 3: Define geographic areas

A The assignment of ZIP codes to geographic areas is carried out by repeatedly running the Esri ArcGIS Pro Location-Allocation tool (this time using the final anchor points as the supply locations and the nationwide ZIP code center points as the demand) starting with the large metro access standard distance for each market type/access standard subset.

B Once a ZIP code is assigned to a geographic area for a subset, it is no longer available for assignment

C Once ZIP code assignments for a market type are complete, the process moves on to the next largest market type

D There were a few instances where nonassignment of ZIP codes occurred. These ZIP codes are assigned by creating new anchor points and repeating the location allocation process or by assigning them to a contiguous geographic area.

E The resulting ZIP code-defined geographic areas are named using the combination of the city, neighborhood (where available) and state where the anchor point resides.

Step 4: Assign geographic areas

The geographic areas are assigned based on the physician's Premium specialty and primary place of service ZIP code.

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Important notes about UnitedHealth Premium

The information from UnitedHealth Premium is not an endorsement of a particular physician or health care professional's suitability for the health care needs of any member. UnitedHealthcare does not practice medicine nor provide health care services. Physicians are solely responsible for medical judgments and treatments.

A Premium Care Physician designation does not guarantee the quality or the outcome of any health care services members receive. The fact that a physician does not have a Premium Care Physician designation does not mean the physician does not provide quality health care services.

All physicians in the UnitedHealthcare Network have met certain minimum credentialing requirements. Regardless of whether a physician has received a Premium Care Physician designation, members have access to all physicians in the UnitedHealthcare Network as described in the member's benefit plan.

There are various reasons why a physician may not be designated as a Premium Care Physician. A physician may not receive a designation because that physician has not been evaluated. This occurs when a physician does not practice in a specialty or market that is evaluated by Premium, or the physician's evaluation is in process. This also occurs when there are not enough measures, patients, and or episodes attributed to the physician for evaluation. This is not an indicator of the total number of patients treated by the physician, or the number of procedures performed by the physician.

UnitedHealthcare informs members that designations are intended only as a guide when choosing a physician and should not be the sole factor in selecting a physician. Members are encouraged to discuss designations with a physician before choosing them or consult with their current physician(s) for advice on selecting other physicians.

As with all programs that evaluate performance based on evaluation of a sample, there is a risk of error. There is a risk of error in the claims data used and in the way patient care is attributed to physicians. UnitedHealth Premium uses statistical testing to compare a physician's performance to benchmarks. There is a risk of error in statistical tests when applied to the data and a result based on statistical testing is not a guarantee of correct inference or classification. Physicians have the opportunity to review the data and evaluation results and may submit requests for changes and or corrections.

The information contained in this document is subject to change.

Learn more

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