

CHCS Technical Assistance for *Aligning Forces for Quality*

Across the U.S., there are wide gaps between the health care that people should receive and the care they actually receive. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is working to close these gaps through *Aligning Forces for Quality* (AF4Q), a multi-stakeholder effort to improve the overall quality of health care in targeted communities, reduce racial and ethnic disparities, and provide models for national reform. To achieve this, AF4Q promotes performance measurement and public reporting, quality improvement and consumer engagement.

Medicaid, which covers approximately 20% of individuals in the U.S., serves a critical and costly segment of the population. More than half of non-elderly Medicaid beneficiaries, for example, are racially/ethnically diverse – a group that experiences more barriers to care, a greater incidence of chronic disease, lower quality of care, and higher mortality than the general population. Improving regional health care quality and reducing racial and ethnic disparities thus requires action by a broad range of health care stakeholders that includes Medicaid leaders, plans, and providers.

Solution

As the nation's largest health coverage program, Medicaid can use its purchasing leverage, access to performance and race/ethnicity data, and financial resources to enhance quality improvement efforts and help reduce disparities throughout a region. Medicaid and its partners, including health plans, quality improvement organizations, and high-volume, high-opportunity provider practices, can also play a critical role in cross-payer, system-wide improvement efforts.

To take advantage of these opportunities, the Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS) is providing technical assistance to engage Medicaid in the AF4Q initiative. Activities will connect AF4Q communities with Medicaid leaders to gather Medicaid provider performance data and race/ethnicity data; build Medicaid state and health plan capacity to support practice improvement; and help commercial health plans collect race, ethnicity, and language data.

CHCS is offering three modules of technical assistance:

1. ***Aligning with Medicaid*** – Will help connect AF4Q communities with key Medicaid stakeholders to collect more robust Medicaid performance data; stratify data by race, ethnicity and primary language; and use data for public reporting and consumer engagement purposes.
2. ***Purchaser, Plan, Practice Improvement*** – Will build the capacity of Medicaid primary care practices to improve care by leveraging resources of state Medicaid agencies, quality improvement organizations, and managed care and community partners. This effort will target high-volume, high-opportunity Medicaid practices, and align stakeholders to support practice site improvements.
3. ***Health Plan Race, Ethnicity, Language Data Collection*** – Will enhance the ability of commercial health plans in AF4Q communities to collect primary race, ethnicity, and language data; link such data to AF4Q performance measures; and integrate disparities work into their quality agenda.

About *Aligning Forces for Quality*

The Center for Health Care Quality at George Washington University supports RWJF as the national program office for AF4Q. For more information about AF4Q, visit www.rwjf.org/qualityequality/af4q/.

About the Center for Health Care Strategies

CHCS is a nonprofit health policy resource center dedicated to improving health care quality for low-income children and adults, people with chronic illnesses and disabilities, frail elders, and racially and ethnically diverse populations experiencing disparities in care. CHCS works directly with state and federal agencies, health plans, and providers to develop innovative programs that better serve Medicaid beneficiaries with complex and high-cost health care needs. For more information about CHCS, visit www.chcs.org.