

Technical Assistance for *Aligning Forces for Quality*:

Aligning with Medicaid

Introduction

As the largest health coverage program in the country, Medicaid serves approximately 67 million Americans¹ – many with a complex and costly array of chronic illnesses and disabilities. No longer a program linked to welfare in many states, Medicaid serves those well beyond its traditional base, including working parents, childless adults, and the recently unemployed. In addition, more than half of non-elderly Medicaid beneficiaries are racially/ethnically diverse² – 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.³ 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.

Medicaid can use its purchasing leverage, access to performance and race/ethnicity/language (R/E/L) data, and financial resources to enhance quality improvement efforts and help reduce disparities throughout a region. Regulatory, legislative, and administrative factors, however, can hinder integration of Medicaid into regional, cross-payer initiatives. Bringing public- and private-sector stakeholders together can help to identify commonalities, overcome these barriers, and optimize improvements in care.

Overview of *Aligning with Medicaid* Technical Assistance

The Center for Health Care Strategies' (CHCS) *Aligning with Medicaid* project will address these issues and help *Aligning Forces for Quality* (AF4Q) communities engage Medicaid in collaborative efforts to improve care across their regions.

This technical assistance is designed to:

- Increase awareness of Medicaid resources within AF4Q communities, as well as awareness of the AF4Q initiative in state Medicaid agencies;
- Actively engage Medicaid leadership in AF4Q quality improvement efforts;
- Integrate Medicaid performance data and R/E/L data into existing performance measurement and reporting strategies of AF4Q communities; and
- Create alignment across quality improvement strategies and activities in each AF4Q community and its state Medicaid program.

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The *Aligning with Medicaid* project addresses two AF4Q priority areas: performance measurement/public reporting, and population-based data/equity through the use of R/E/L data within Medicaid.

AF4Q communities interested in receiving technical assistance through the *Aligning with Medicaid* project should e-mail Dianne Hasselman at dhasselman@chcs.org.

Additional Technical Assistance for **AF4Q** Communities

AF4Q communities are also eligible to participate in the following CHCS technical assistance projects:

- *Advancing Primary Care* – Project will assess practices that serve the Medicaid population in select **AF4Q** communities to better understand practice characteristics that correlate with high and low performance. Results will help communities to understand the practices’ strengths and weaknesses; assess their needs for support; and potentially design interventions for under-performing practices.
 - *Health Plan Race, Ethnicity, Language Data Collection* – Project will enhance the ability of commercial health plans in **AF4Q** communities to collect primary R/E/L data.
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About *Aligning Forces for Quality*

Aligning Forces for Quality, a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) initiative, brings together those who get care, give care and pay for care to improve the quality of health care in entire communities. RWJF’s unprecedented commitment of resources, expertise and training is turning proven practices into real results in 15 communities, including Albuquerque, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Humboldt County (Calif.), Kansas City (Mo.), Maine, Memphis, Minnesota, Puget Sound (Wash.), South Central Pennsylvania, West Michigan, Western New York, Willamette Valley (Ore.) and Wisconsin. For more information, log onto 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.

¹ Health Management Associates estimate for 2009 based on Congressional Budget Office, *Budget and Economic Outlook*, January 2008. Note: This estimate represents the number of Medicaid beneficiaries ever enrolled in 2009 (not average enrollment).

² Medicaid Statistical Information System State Summary FY 2004, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, June 2007.

³ Institute of Medicine (2002). “Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care,” <http://iom.edu/CMS/3740/4475.aspx>.