

Practice Transformation Support Hub

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What is practice transformation?

Answer:

Practice transformation refers to planned changes to the processes, policies and systems inside a clinic or practice. Each practice that takes on projects to transform the way they provide care sets its own goals tailored to their setting and particular needs. Planned changes may be at the clinic or organizational level.

Practice transformation can include changes to workforce patterns and who provides what services to a patient. Providers may move to working with teams—including medical assistants, nurses and front desk staff—in new ways to improve a patient’s experience and the effectiveness of the provider in a limited office visit.

Practice transformation can include using lean methods to improve how work flows through a practice, such as steps taken to track referrals to specialists. Practice transformation might also include improving the use of Electronic Health Records to track populations of patients or produce meaningful data for decision making.

What IS the Practice Transformation Support Hub (the Hub)?

Answer:

The “Hub” is one of the key investment areas of Healthier Washington, Washington State’s State Innovation Model (SIM) grant, and is managed by the Washington State Department of Health.

The Hub has three components to help advance Healthier Washington’s goals to catalyze health system transformation across the state:

- The Practice Coaching, Facilitation and Training Program
- The Health Connector Network, a Health Extension System
- The Web Based Resource Portal

What is NOT the Practice Transformation Support Hub?

Answer:

- The Hub will not provide grants or funding to practices or providers. The Hub’s Coaches will provide hands on coaching to practices and providers to assist them to advance practice transformation in their own settings.
- The Hub’s connectors will not develop or build new community programs or resources. The Hub Connectors will inform Accountable Communities of Health about what community resources providers are asking for through the Hub help desk and let the community know where gaps in services exist.

How does the Hub fit into the Healthier Washington strategy?

Answer:

Healthier Washington’s strategy depends on the three-legged stool of paying for value, community and providers. While Healthier Washington’s Value Based Payment Roadmap addresses paying for value and the Accountable Communities of Health activate communities, the Hub is intended to support small to medium practices as they respond to the transforming health system landscape.

Who may use Hub services?

Answer:

Hub services are available statewide:

- Coaches and Connectors – Coaching, training, and technical assistance services and referrals services specifically for behavioral health and primary care practices with 20 or fewer providers.
- Resource Portal – A curated website with information and resources for the broader practice transformation community, and for other stakeholders applying population health tools and methods to transforming the health system.

The Hub will share best practices in practice transformation to encourage standardization of approaches where appropriate.

Who is providing Hub services?

Answer:

Here are the organizations involved in Hub work:

- Coaching and Connector services: Provided through Qualis Health, a national firm with a 30-year history of working with providers on quality improvement and practice transformation in Washington State. **Hub Help Desk:** 206-288-2540 / 800-949-7536 ext. 2540; HubHelpDesk@qualishealth.org
- Resource Portal: University of Washington Department of Family Medicine Primary Care Innovations Lab. **Resource portal:** waportal.org
- Management: Washington State Department of Health, Health Systems Transformation and Innovation.

The University of Washington Primary Care Innovations Lab will work with Qualis Health and the broader practice transformation community in Washington State to ensure the best set of practice transformation resources available are curated and shared broadly through the Hub's web-based Resource Portal.

What is the cost to providers to use Hub services?

Answer:

There is no fee to use Hub services.

How is Practice Transformation different from ACH projects?

Answer:

Practice Transformation refers to activity undertaken by a practice or a system of practices to transform their operations, usually in a targeted effort to achieve the Triple Aim of better health, better care and lower cost.

These projects are inside clinics and typically have not been coordinated with other practices or providers in the same geographic region. Each organization has independently responded to the needs of their providers, their patients and their payers.

Accountable Communities of Health (ACH) are concerned with the health system that serves the citizens of a geographic region and are tasked with bringing together leaders from many sectors to assess health needs, prioritize needs for action and to catalyze the community to address the prioritized needs.

Health system transformation at the community level will have an agenda set by the ACH while an individual practice will set its specific goals for practice transformation.

How does the Hub support ACH projects?

Answer:

When an ACH project—such as one addressing the opioid crisis—includes desired actions of providers, the goal is that the Connector/Coach in that ACH would support communicating that goal to the local provider community.

The role of the Hub Connector will be to respond to individual request for resources and technical assistance from providers and practices, with an emphasis on referrals to practice transformation resources in areas such as payment reform or resources to advance clinical practice of delivering whole person care.

The Connector will also inventory and share community resources for clinicians to access for their patients, but will depend largely on work done in the region by ACHs and other community organizations. The Hub will specialize in referrals to technical assistance for practice transformation.

The Web Resource Portal will also support ACH projects by being responsive to needs for data, trainings and resources.

What is the difference between a practice transformation coach/facilitator and a health coach?

Answer:

Practice Transformation Coach: a practice transformation coach facilitates organizational change in primary care or behavioral health clinics. The practice transformation coach may administer a survey such as the Practice Assessment Tool (PAT) to provide a baseline for practices of where they perform on dimensions of practice transformation.

The coach facilitates the leadership team in setting goals and committing to areas of improvement and change. The coach then supports key staff in developing and implementing a work plan to meet practice goals, including coaching through cultural change and areas of resistance that address the human side of organizational change. The coach does not do the work, but rather supports the staff leading the work with advice, technical assistance, tools, encouragement and regular feedback and accountability.

Health Coach: a health coach also encourages change, but in the health behaviors of a patient. The practice transformation coach facilitates organizational change. The health coach facilitates behavior change in a patient or group of patients, often those managing chronic diseases such as diabetes or hypertension.

Health transformation requires change at all levels: the patient, the provider and health care system as well as in the community and the health neighborhood. The practice transformation coach targets change in specific practices in the health care delivery system. The health coach works for change in patient health behaviors. The Accountable Communities of Health are charged with bringing synergy and leadership to the many ongoing efforts to bring change at the community level.

How is the Hub different from the Pediatric Transforming Clinical Practice Initiative (TCPI) project?

Answer:

- Both are funded through the federal Centers for Medicaid and Medicare, but through different initiatives.
- Practices can enroll in either the Hub or the Pediatric TCPI to receive coaching services.
- Hub coaches are employees of Qualis Health.
- Pediatric TCPI coaches are employed by the Department of Health.
- The Hub coaching services are targeted toward practices of fewer than 20 providers, including behavioral health agencies and primary care practices. The coaching will aim to advance the level of behavioral health integration in enrolled practices, but will also advance readiness for value based payment and improve the practice's linkage to community resources and programs.
- The Pediatric TCPI targets pediatric practices, but will also enroll other practices and behavioral health agencies that serve children.

Coach and Connector Questions

How are the Connectors different from the Coaches? Are they different people, or will a Coach also be a Connector?

Answer:

The Coach and Connector roles, while distinct and separate, will be performed by the same individuals that are part of the Qualis Health team.

- The Practice Coach role is to provide technical assistance for practice transformation to participating/enrolled practices.
- The Connector role is broader, providing support for participating and non-participating practices. Connectors help to ensure that practices are linked with appropriate transformation and community-based resources that will support them with quality improvement, patient care, behavioral health integration, and health payment reform purposes at local, regional and statewide levels.

What is the timeline for having Practice Coaches and Connectors in the field? Where will they be based?

Answer:

We anticipate nine staff who will be available for practice coaching and connector services; one in each of the nine regional service areas (RSAs). They may be based in the specific RSA that they serve or from a surrounding area, depending on practice needs and availability of resources. Qualis Health already has a bench of a few Practice Coaches and Connectors that are ready to provide assistance immediately and they expect more staff will come on-board as a greater number of practices engage in the Hub services.

What services will the coaches offer to practices? What can a practice expect of a coach? Provide concrete examples of what the Hub can do to help a practice transform.

Answer:

All participating practices will undergo an initial practice assessment to identify priorities, gaps, and other areas for transformation focus, with the goal of behavioral health integration. Based on the assessment results, a customized action plan will be developed for the practice to help them on the path toward achieving their practice transformation objectives.

This customized action plan may also include elements of foundational quality improvement training (e.g., Model for Improvement), basics of practice transformation (e.g., empanelment, team-based care, enhanced access, etc.), and utilizing electronic health records (EHRs) as a tool for quality improvement and population health management, as appropriate to the practice.

Some specific examples of behavioral health integration support include:

- Helping practices understand different models of behavioral health integration, and which models may be appropriate for the practice's specific situation.
- Advancing workflow redesign processes within the practice for screening, assessing, treating, and/or referring to treatment.
- Documenting and updating data about targeted patient populations through the use of health IT, and generating ongoing data reports to track progress.
- Providing guidance on the referral process (e.g., how to refer, where to refer).
- Serving as an information sources regarding the community-based resources that may be of assistance to practices and patients.

This work will be conducted through on-site visits, remote support (e.g., telephone, webinar, email), multi-group technical assistance (e.g., workshops), and broad educational events. A hybrid of these approaches will be available to the practice and will align with practice needs.

How will coaching prepare practices for value-based payment?

Answer:

In a value-based payment environment, practices will need to demonstrate through reported clinical quality data that they are providing high quality of care for patients. Many practices will need practice transformation coaching to understand how to implement quality improvement strategies that will positively impact patient outcomes, as well as how to utilize tools such as EHRs for data generation and monitoring of improvement progress. Additionally, Practice Coaches/Connectors will link practices with appropriate VBP resources for further education and assistance.

What commitments do practices need to make to engage in coaching?

Answer:

Practice Coaches/Connectors will meet practices where they are and provide services commensurate with the practice's desired levels of assistance. However, at a minimum, practices should commit to participating in the initial practice assessment and plan to spend between three to five hours a month on their practice transformation projects, with support from the Practice Coach/Connector. Additionally, the practice should consider identifying a Quality Improvement Lead and developing a quality improvement team to drive practice changes.

What services will you offer to practices that don't want to focus on Behavioral Health Integration?

Answer:

The Hub's goal is to provide support to practices based on their current transformation status, through a "no wrong door" approach.

We invite practices to:

- Participate in our Practice Transformation Learning and Action Network webinar and in-person events.
- Access practice transformation and community-based resources via the Resource Portal.
- Contact Qualis Health through their help desk with questions about practice transformation, as well as the local, regional, and statewide community-based resources that may be available to support you.