

Iowa Collaborative Safety Net Provider Network

Update

Friday, September 5, 2008

The Iowa Collaborative Safety Net Provider Network was created in 2005 by the Iowa General Assembly. The Network provides a forum for safety net health care providers from across the state to identify common unmet needs that can be addressed cooperatively. Network participants include community health centers, free clinics, rural health clinics, family planning agencies, maternal and child health centers and local boards of health. The Network is administered by the Iowa/Nebraska Primary Care Association.

Vision for the Network

The devastating natural disasters that occurred over the summer across the state of Iowa displaced many Iowans, stretched the resources of state and local government, the private sector, and Iowa's citizens, and again illustrated that the safety net population is often hardest hit when such unfortunate challenges arise. The Network staff applauds the dedication and commitment Iowans extended their fellow citizens as the disasters struck and work to rebuild began. We know the providers that make up the Safety Net Provider Network were often at the forefront in providing resources and services to those in need.

This year marks the fourth year of the Network and we are again charged by the Iowa Legislature to support safety net providers as they assist patients in accessing a medical home, ensure patients have access to specialty care services and affordable pharmaceuticals, and that we collect critical data from safety net providers for use in policy development and systems change efforts. Three areas of focus for the Network this year will be strategic planning, better communicating about the work of the Network, and refining our data collection and reporting processes.

The importance of our strategic planning initiative cannot be emphasized enough given the broad and comprehensive health care reform occurring within the state. We want to take advantage of this unique opportunity in time to include, in a very deliberate fashion, the needs of safety net patients in this reform. With active participation of Safety Net Network Advisory and Leadership groups we intend to provide input to the policymakers and funders so access to coordinated healthcare for all Iowans improves.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to safety net patients and providers in Iowa.

-Ted Boesen, Executive Director, Iowa Collaborative Safety Net Provider Network

Legislature Appropriates \$1.6 Million to Network

This spring, the Iowa General Assembly renewed its commitment to the Network by maintaining level funding of \$1.6 million for the effort. Funding includes:

- Free Clinics: \$250,000
- Rural Health Clinics: \$150,000
- Family Planning Agencies: \$100,000
- Maternal & Child Health Centers (three pilot programs): \$100,000
- Local Boards of Health that provide direct services (three pilot programs): \$100,000
- Pharmacy Initiative: \$400,000
- Specialty Care Initiative: \$400,000
- Network Administration (Iowa/Nebraska Primary Care Association): \$100,000

Thanks to the Legislature and Governor Culver for their continued support of Network activities!

Network Accomplishments for FY08

Direct Provider Awards

In FY08, \$350,000 was made available for direct provider awards for free clinics, rural health clinics, and family planning agencies. Funds were used to support a number of unmet needs including pharmaceuticals for patients who otherwise could not afford them, recruitment of health care providers, purchasing information technology equipment and software, assisting patients with transportation expenses to appointments, and purchasing medical supplies and equipment.

The following outlines the distribution for the direct provider awards:

- Free Clinics: \$100,000. All 30 free clinics requested and received funding.
- Rural Health Clinics: \$150,000. Of 142 eligible RHCs, 84 clinics requested and received funding.
- Family Planning Agencies: \$100,000. Of 18 eligible agencies, 14 requested and received funding.

Pilots

Specialty Care Networks

Four grants were provided to organizations to develop or build capacity for improving access to specialty care for safety net patients. A brief summary of each grant awarded is below.

- *Polk County Medical Society – Polk County* (\$175,000): The grant was used to add capacity to an already established volunteer physician network that includes physician recruitment, retention, and recognition. Goals for the network included: more effectively coordinate physicians and uninsured clients; assist safety net providers in securing appropriate medical care for patients; and ensure availability of specialty care to uninsured patients in a timely manner. Polk County Medical Society (PCMS) was successful in recruiting more physicians/specialists to participate in the network and again began facilitating referrals from safety net providers.
- *Primary Health Care, Inc. – Des Moines* (\$75,000): The capacity building grant was used to undertake a planning process for an alternative system for accessing mental health specialty services. Primary Health Care (PHC) worked in partnership with Behavioral Health Resources, a Community Mental Health Center, to develop better and stronger relationships among specialty mental health and primary medical care providers. An integrated model of behavioral health care will be implemented during the next contract year.
- *Healthy Linn Care Network – Linn County* (\$75,000): The capacity building grant was used to develop *Linn County Project Access*, a volunteer physician specialty care referral network, which will also be assisting patients in determining an appropriate medical home. The network, when fully operational, will allow individuals who seek medical care in Linn County from more than 80 surrounding communities the ability to receive more comprehensive, coordinated, and timely care.
- *University of Northern Iowa – Cedar Falls* (\$25,000): The University of Northern Iowa (UNI) convened a series of stakeholder meetings to explore the need for and opportunities for developing a network for accessing specialty care in Black Hawk County.

Medical Home Initiatives

Legislation provided funding for two additional safety net partners: three local boards of health that provide direct services and three maternal and child health organizations. Network staff worked with state and association leadership to determine the best process for distribution of these funds and a competitive process was determined to be both fair and reasonable. Approval for this process was provided by the Network Leadership Group and requests for proposals were developed and issued. As a result of the independent review process, contracts were negotiated with the following organizations:

Local Boards of Health Medical Home Capacity Building

- *Dallas County Board of Health – Dallas County* (\$33,000): Grant funds were used to incorporate a medical home initiative into a Building Healthy Communities in Dallas County initiative.
- *Polk County Health Department – Polk County* (\$33,300): Grant funds were used to assess the current system's capacity to meet the needs of the medically homeless.
- *Calhoun County – Calhoun County* (\$33,333): Grant funds were used to expand a current medical home initiative for children to include dental and mental health homes. Funds were also used to explore the feasibility and develop a plan to implement a medical home initiative for adults.

Maternal and Child Health Centers Medical Home Capacity Building

- *Crittenton Center – Sioux City* (\$29,812): Grant funds were used to establish a medical home task force made up of health care and non-health care service providers and working with and expanding the current Mission Health initiative.
- *Dubuque Visiting Nurse Association – Dubuque* (\$35,068): Grant funds were used to provide enhanced case management services to fully implement a current medical and dental home initiative.
- *Visiting Nurse Services – Des Moines* (\$35,117): Grant funds were used to build medical home capacity through the collection and analysis of information regarding the perceptions, attitudes, and understanding of a medical home by clients and direct service providers.

Volunteer Health Care Provider Program

Of the \$250,000 allocated to free clinics, \$60,000 was provided to the Iowa Department of Public Health to support a staff person for the Volunteer Health Care Provider Program. VHCPP provides liability coverage for health care providers who volunteer at free clinics.

Free Clinics of Iowa

The Network Leadership Group approved the distribution of \$40,000 to Free Clinics of Iowa (FCI). FCI is the largest network of free clinics in the state and provides administrative and operational support to its 19 member clinics. Network funding helps support FCI infrastructure, provide statewide coordination of free clinic operation and collaboration, support FCI member needs for quality service delivery, and support collaboration with other safety net providers to identify appropriate referrals to medical homes when patients present beyond the free clinic scope of work.

Free Clinic Medical Home Pilots

Up to \$50,000 was made available to free clinics in the state that met certain criteria (open extended hours, serve over 500 safety net patients) for medical home capacity grants. Two grants were made to House of Mercy Medical Clinic (\$9,943) for capacity building around development of a medical home for low-income Spanish speaking patients and to the Iowa City Free Medical Clinic (\$25,000) to augment and improve services and capacity around medical home tenets.

Pharmacy

Drug Donation Repository Program

Last year the Drug Donation Repository Program, a program administered by the Iowa Prescription Drug Corporation (IPDC), continued to provide needed pharmaceuticals to safety net patients across the state of Iowa.

The IPDC was successful in their efforts to inform key legislators in changing a statute and administrative rule regarding the expiration date of donated drugs. Previously, no drug that expired within six months of expiration date was allowed to be donated. SF 2177, signed into law this year by Governor Culver, allows drugs that are in high demand to be donated within that six month time period if that drug can be dispensed before it expires.

Many Iowans continue to benefit from this program. In the last quarter 628 people, ages 10 through

88, received medication, and 37,108 tablets were dispensed at 23 sites. The most common conditions medications were needed for were blood pressure/cardiac, depression, antibiotics, pain control, and diabetes.

Finally, beginning July 1, 2008 newly purchased software allows IPDC to maintain their inventory, generate needed reports for the program, and make the inventory available online, password protected, to local repositories so they can view and order their medications online.

Prescription Medication Discount Card

The IPDC also launched a Prescription Medication Discount Card in the spring. This card is available to all safety net patients with no access to coverage for pharmacy costs and provides access to a substantial list of drugs available at reduced costs within a guaranteed range of pricing. IPDC will be focusing on outreach and promotion of this new program in the next fiscal year. For more information about this program or to access the cards for safety net patients, contact info@iowapriority.org or toll free at 866-282-5817.

FY09

Direct Provider Awards

As outlined in this year's legislation, direct provider awards will again be made available to free clinics, rural health clinics, and family planning agencies. This year's awards will be made this September/October. Watch your mail for more information.

Pilots

This year's safety net legislation provided level funding for the Network and its initiatives and allows for continuation of successful pilot projects funded this year or competitive processes for funding the legislatively mandated organizations. The Network sought guidance from the Leadership Group to determine the granting process and they agreed to appoint a subcommittee to review and approve the continuation of proposals from the FY08 grantees. All of the FY08 grantees expressed an interest in continued funding and all successful grants were awarded by the end of last month. Additionally, all FY09 pilots will be working with the Network's independent evaluator to determine measurable goals and relevant data for reporting during the project year.

State Health Care Reform

With the passage of House File 2539 this spring, the State of Iowa took a major step in ensuring all Iowans have access to health care coverage. The effort, led by Sen. Jack Hatch and Rep. Ro Foege, places Iowa at the forefront of health care reform initiatives with only a handful of states aggressively pursuing comprehensive coverage and changes in the delivery system.

HF 2539 includes a number of initiatives to ensure coverage, including expansion of hawk-i (Iowa's State Children's Health Insurance Program) and Medicaid. The bill also establishes a number of advisory groups, including the Medical Home Advisory Group, which will include a Network representative. We will continue to keep you informed on activities of the Advisory Group, as well as other health care reform efforts.

3rd Rebuilding Healthcare in the Heartland Conference

On December 4, 2008 the University of Iowa health sciences colleges are partnering with many others to hold a policy conference "Healthcare in the Heartland". This all-day event will be held at the Embassy Suites in Des Moines IA. Health care reform issues will be discussed with featured speakers, including Dr. Ed Schor with the Commonwealth Fund, formerly a medical director with the Iowa Department of Public Health. Issues discussed will transcend the issues of quality, access and cost as well as all population groups with an emphasis on children, elderly and the disabled.

The event will also feature information from the committees formed as a result of the recent legislation HF2539, one of the most comprehensive packages of health reform legislation passed anywhere in the nation. This legislation promises to have a profound impact on the way we organize and carry our health services in Iowa. Among the provisions of this legislation are steps, recommendations or processes established to address such issues as a medical home, child health coverage, information systems and chronic disease.

For more information contact Chris Atchison, event chair, at: chris-atchison@uiowa.edu.

Questions about the Network?

For more information on the Iowa Collaborative Safety Net Provider Network, visit our website at www.iowasafetynet.com. We can also be contacted at info@iowasafetynet.com or 515-244-9610.