

Best Practices for Member Outreach and Engagement

How Effective ACOs Build Understanding and Respect



ABSTRACT

Targeted strategies and sustained efforts at member outreach and engagement are helping Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) and their Community Partners (CPs) achieve their shared goals for delivering patient-centered care. The most successful organizations focus on activities designed to create a stronger connection with their members, building trust and a better understanding of individuals' characteristics and care needs. Positive results of these efforts include successful person-centered care planning, improved compliance with care plans and prescriptions, and implementation of recommended lifestyle changes — changes that help support independent living, reduce medical costs and complications, and drive improvements in member satisfaction.



Make Connections

- **New member welcome calls:** Timely welcome calls to new members help increase engagement and participation in care plans and sets the stage for improved member satisfaction. As a first point of contact, the calls are an effective opportunity to begin relationship building, helping members learn about and understand their available benefits.
- **Appointment reminders:** Efforts to reduce the “no show” rate for doctors appointments are effective at helping to improve members' well-being, while delivering positive impact to revenue. A multilingual customer service staff plays a key role by helping ACOs communicate with plan members who may come from a wide range of backgrounds.
- **Updated contact list:** Successful outreach and engagement begins with good member contact information. ACOs that make the effort to build and maintain an up-to-date contact list are more efficient and effective over the long term. If a first call is unsuccessful, try again on a different day of the week or time of day. For members who are hard to reach, mailings sent out after initial phone calls may help boost the response rate.



Nurture Communication

- **Cultural and linguistic competence:** Organizations that commit to hiring staff who reflect the cultural, ethnic, language and social composition of member populations are more effective at relationship building, engagement and care planning; which, in turn, helps eliminate disparities in care delivery and improves quality and outcomes. Front-line staff and care team managers who are trained in the principles of cultural proficiency, courtesy, and motivational interviewing gain important insight, sensitivity and skills that help them serve patients from diverse backgrounds.
- **Quality medical interpretation:** Effective ACOs recognize the important, highly-specialized role of competent medical interpreters, who help improve quality of care and patient satisfaction, and reduce the potential health risks and liabilities associated with misdiagnoses and non-compliance with care plans. Consider providing customized training programs for spoken language and ASL interpreters to develop skills they need to address clinical issues such as behavioral health, substance use disorder, and palliative care.



Improve Outcomes

- **Financial assistance and coordination of benefits:** Helping members understand and access all the benefits to which they are entitled leads to better care. This is especially true for members who face chronic or complex medical issues and/or challenges posed by language or native culture. With that in mind, effective ACOs help members connect with all the resources and services available to them through state agencies and local community-based organizations.
- **Health risk assessments:** For ACOs concerned with delivering effective health care services and controlling costs, an especially important and effective first step is conducting health risk assessments. When conducted as part of a home visit, health risk assessments are an integral part of member engagement, helping build trust while collecting vitally important information on health status, risks and habits that will help shape effective plans for care, prevention and healthy lifestyle choices.
- **Medication adherence:** Focusing on member engagement — understanding members' beliefs, perceptions, and barriers or limitations — leads to better health outcomes. Making sure members take their medications as directed helps them to safely manage chronic medical and health conditions, while improving an ACO's quality metrics. This is especially true when it comes to high cost, high-risk drugs — underscoring the importance of engaging a pharmacy team as full partners in care delivery.



We Can Help

Commonwealth Medicine, the health care consulting and operations division of UMass Medical School, has been working in the Massachusetts Medicaid health care ecosystem for nearly 30 years, where we have proven our effectiveness at delivering technical assistance to public agencies. We partner with ACOs and CPs to help improve the quality and cost effectiveness of care provided to Medicaid members.

Our long experience with a wide range of clients provides us with the skills, knowledge and insight to effectively serve a variety of member populations, from seniors to families of children with complex care needs. Our team of subject matter experts have significant expertise in call centers, member outreach, care coordination, cultural and linguistic competency, and motivational interviewing. We also have partnerships with organizations that include Long Term Care Innovation, LLC, Abacus Health Solutions, and SMC Partners, LLC.

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