

### The Great Plains Quality Innovation Network

Great Plains Quality Innovation Network was awarded the Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO) contract for Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota [through July 2019]. The focus of the QIN-QIO activity is quality improvement and technical assistance.

Each of the four Great Plains QIN state partners share a commitment to improving quality of care and working to ensure that all patients receive the right care, at the right time, every time. Working together within a four-state network, each organization will continue their focus on improving care in conjunction with state partners, while pooling resources and common elements into an organization that can best serve the needs of healthcare providers and Medicare consumers across the region.

### About Quality Innovation Network – Quality Improvement Organizations (QIN-QIOs)

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services QIO Program is an integral part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) National Quality Strategy and is one of the largest federal programs dedicated to improving health quality at the community level. This network of works in partnership with patients and families, providers, communities and healthcare stakeholders in every setting in which care is delivered. QIN-QIOs assist patients and families, providers and communities to make care safer, support active engagement and self-management of chronic conditions, eliminate health disparities, promote best practices for healthy living, deliver improved access to care and make care affordable.

### Improving Cardiac Health, Preventing Stroke and Reducing Cardiac Disparities

Heart disease and stroke are, respectively, the first- and fourth-leading causes of death in the United States for all demographic groups, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The disproportionate impact of these diseases on racial and ethnic minorities is a key target of QIN-QIO work with Medicare consumers and their families, providers and community stakeholders.

In alignment with the HHS Million Hearts<sup>®</sup> goal to prevent one million heart attacks and strokes by 2017, QIN-QIOs focus on improving the ABCS of cardiac risk reduction (**A**spirin therapy when appropriate, **B**lood pressure



As of August 1, 2014, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has established a new functional structure for the Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) Program that delivers program value to patients and families, maximizes learning and collaboration for improving care, and supports the spread and sustainment of effective new practices and models of care. Under the new structure, CMS has separated case review from quality improvement work, with both segments of the QIO Program serving all 50 states and three territories.

Two Beneficiary and Family Centered Care-QIOs review quality of care concerns and appeals, while 14 Quality Innovation Network-QIOs work with providers and communities on data-driven quality initiatives to improve patient safety, reduce harm, engage patients and families, and improve clinical care at the community level. To learn more, visit [www.qioprogram.org](http://www.qioprogram.org).

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control, Cholesterol management and Smoking screening and cessation). The Million Hearts<sup>®</sup> initiative also created a priority focus on blood pressure measurement and control. High blood pressure has long been considered a “silent killer” in that many people do not demonstrate signs and/or symptoms of the disease. As part of this national effort, the QIO Program is targeting blood pressure measurement and control as essential to preventing heart attacks and strokes and decreasing the number of Americans who die unnecessarily as a result of untreated hypertension.

### Reducing Disparities in Diabetes Care

In the United States, nearly one-third of adults 65 years and older have diabetes, according to the National Institutes of Health (2011). Diabetes is the most common cause of blindness, kidney failure and amputations in adults and a leading cause of heart disease and stroke.

The CDC reports that African-Americans are from 1.4 to 2.2 times more likely to have diabetes than Caucasians, that people who identify as Hispanic/Latino have a higher prevalence of diabetes than non-Hispanic populations and that the prevalence of diabetes among American Indians/Native Americans is 2.8 times the overall rate. Targeting these populations and Medicare consumers of any ethnicity living in rural areas, QIN-QIOs, through the Everyone with Diabetes Counts program, help patients and families, providers and communities address this serious chronic condition and its disproportionate effects on racial/ethnic and rural populations.

QIN-QIOs work with familiar and trusted people and organizations within communities to provide diabetes self-management education where it is convenient; for example, holding classes at a local senior center. This community-based approach encourages participation and provides a structure to support people in their ongoing commitment to self-management. By working with healthcare providers, practitioners, certified diabetes educators and community health workers, people with diabetes can acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to improve the quality of their lives by preventing or lessening the severity of complications resulting from diabetes.

### Coordinating Prevention through Health Information Technology

Effective use of Health Information Technology (HIT) decreases paperwork, improves access to medical records and facilitates care coordination among providers. QIN-QIOs have many years of experience working with physician practices and Regional Extension Centers (RECs) to support the use of certified Electronic Health Record (EHR) technology as a tool for better patient care. Currently, QIN-QIOs are providing targeted technical assistance to physicians, acute care hospitals and Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) that qualify for the Medicare EHR Incentive Program and have significant barriers to using EHR functionality for quality improvement. QIN-QIOs continue to collaborate with RECs to increase the number of practices that employ an IT-enabled care management approach for primary care prevention and early diagnosis. Examples of this approach include using EHR functionalities, like registries, to identify patients who need a mammogram or other preventive service. By participating in QIN-QIO health IT initiatives, physicians also will be well-positioned for future payment incentives linked to clinical data reporting.

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### Improving Adult Immunization Rates

Influenza and pneumonia are vaccine-preventable diseases. However, according to the CDC, together they were the 8th leading cause of death in the United States in 2012 with ninety percent of influenza deaths occurring in adults 65 and older. Immunization rates among adults have historically been low and data show a disparity in rates among racial and ethnic minorities. In addition, there is evidence that annual influenza immunization decreases morbidity and mortality in people with cardiovascular disease.

In collaboration with key partners and stakeholders, QIN-QIOs are working with providers and beneficiaries to implement evidence-based practices and systems changes in those states showing the greatest need for improvement. Following current Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) guidelines outlining the Standards for Adult Immunization Practice, QIN-QIOs are focused on improving routine assessment of patients' vaccination status, improving immunization rates, especially in minority and underserved populations and increasing documentation of Medicare beneficiary immunization status in immunization registries where available.

### Learn More and Become Involved

The Great Plains QIN and the QIO Program invites all providers, community stakeholders, Medicare consumers, family members and caregivers to become partners in its improvement initiatives. For more information on the services offered in our region, [visit our Website](#). Also, be sure to join our Learning and Action Network to get connected. LAN members will have access to tools, resources, education, subject matter experts and networking opportunities. All improvers welcome; [join today!](#)

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