



Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.

Washington State's Aging Network: Partners in Health Reform Solutions

Washington State's 13 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and their network of health and social service providers bring new opportunities for new health reform savings and improvements to the community.

Chronic Care Management



Currently six AAAs offer specialized care management by nurses and social workers to people with multiple chronic conditions who are very high users of

Medicaid-funded health services. These Chronic Care Management (CCM) pilot programs show early promise in controlling health care costs and improving health outcomes.

Adults in chronic care management have high costs in pharmacy, emergency room and hospital care due to chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, mental health and/or substance abuse. CCM pilot enrollees create their own health action plan and goals, and receive education and support for the self management of their chronic illnesses. Their care managers offer diabetes, pain and medication management education and coaching, using evidence-based protocols, and coordinate across multiple health providers.

Early results demonstrate:

- Decreased mortality rates.
- Fewer inpatient hospital stays.
- Fewer emergency room visits.
- Improved health condition, living environment and access to treatment.

In King County, 90 percent of enrollees report the achievement of at least one of their health care goals.

Care Transitions

Effective "care transitions" programs make it easier for older adults who leave the hospital to return home, get the care they need in the community, and stay independent longer. Care transitions programs empower patients to be active members of their transition team, by providing coaches to assist patients with goal setting, ongoing self-management, follow-up care arrangements, and provider communication.

Hospitals refer patients to community partners, such as AAAs, that can:

- Link patients to community services to help them stay independent at home.
- Offer evidence-based programs, such as the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program, to empower patients to manage their own health.
- Teach patients how to communicate effectively with health care providers to ensure their needs are met.

Currently, a Care Transitions program in Whatcom County involves multiple health, hospital and social service providers, with the AAA as a key partner.



Aging and Disability Resource Centers

Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) educate individuals and their families about health and long-term care options, to make informed decisions, and enable individuals who are at high risk of nursing home placement to remain in their own homes for as long as possible.



Key ADRC elements include:

- Seamless system from the consumer's perspective.
- High level of visibility and trust.
- Proactive counseling about long-term care pathways.
- Formal partnerships across aging, disability and Medicaid.
- Service for all income levels.

In addition, ADRCs empower older adults to stay active and healthy through evidence-based health promotion programs and prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation of older people through Elder Rights programs.

At present, three AAAs are developing ADRC models for their communities. One AAA (Pierce County) has operated an Aging and Disability Resource Center for five years.

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