

Abstract

Although the quality of health care is a concern for all Americans, the quality of care received by our children has become an especially critical issue. Recent studies show that children are not receiving needed screenings, immunizations and vital care management for chronic conditions. In this time of economic crisis, where public funding for vital programs is threatened, it is important that we look for new and innovative methods to provide the highest quality of care in the most efficient manner. With that goal in mind, the Oklahoma Health Care Authority submits the following grant proposal to improve the quality of care for SoonerCare (Medicaid/CHIP) children in our state.

Our grant proposal consists of four parts working together to create a comprehensive health care system for SoonerCare children. Working together these parts will utilize new technology, quality measures and the dissemination of best practices in order to create an atmosphere of change and quality improvement that will enable the Oklahoma Health Care Authority to provide the best quality of care in the most efficient manner possible. Partnering with three Health Access Networks (HANs), we will be able to take advantage of the foundation of committed providers in executing these innovations creating a multi-regional infrastructure of change.

The first part of our grant proposal addresses the core quality measures developed by CMS. The Partnership for a Healthy Canadian County (PHCC) HAN has a provider base across urban and rural areas. In partnership with PHCC, we will formulate a consensus of best practices in how to collect, analyze and evaluate the usefulness of the data on these quality measures. What will make this proposal unique are the range of providers and the level of technology used in their practices. We will be able to evaluate the success of the core quality measures with a range of providers, from those maintaining only paper records to those working in totally electronic and technically savvy offices.

The second part of our proposal will look at the use of (Health Information Technology) HIT in improving quality of care. By utilizing technology for specialist referrals and care coordination, the Oklahoma State University (OSU-CHS) HAN will strive for closing the gap between providers of different specialties by streamlining patient referrals. This group will also look at using technology to improve care transition by electronically transferring lab results and consultation records, and to improve the management of chronic conditions by creating a patient registry.

The third part of our proposal involves the University of Oklahoma-Tulsa (OUTCM) HAN, which will focus on the evaluation of the electronic health record (EHR) template being developed by the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality. This group will test the pediatric EHR format, and work with the providers in the HAN to determine how this will improve the quality of care for SoonerCare children. These providers are already working with the use of EHR in their practices, so they are ideally placed to integrate the pediatric EHR and develop recommendations for the best methods of using this tool for the improvement of care.

The last part of our proposal will focus on working with all of our HANs to integrate methods that will enhance the innovations and create a system of continuous quality improvement. This initiative will not only test the feasibility and value of local (decentralized) quality improvement infrastructure, but it also will enhance the other initiatives in this proposal by providing additional support for the changes that will be implemented.

As each HAN brings its focus area into implementation, it will pass its plans, successes and lessons learned to the other HAN groups. By the end of the grant period, each group will implement not just its particular section, but all the proposals encompassed by this grant application. Once the ground has been broken and the best, most efficient and effective methods of implementation have been explored, this new method of care will provide a template for other provider groups treating SoonerCare children to follow. This could be replicated throughout the State of Oklahoma and the United States in order to improve care and outcomes, creating a lasting impact on the health of our children.