New England Asthma Innovations Collaborative (NEAIC)
Health Resources in Action/Asthma Regional Council of New England

ABSTRACT

In July 2012, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) granted Health Resources in Action (HRiA)/Asthma Regional Council of New England (ARC) a Health Care Innovation Challenge award to establish and support the "New England Asthma Innovation Collaborative" (NEAIC). The goal of NEAIC is to improve asthma outcomes, quality of care, and health care costs of primarily Medicaid and CHIP-enrolled children by advancing home-based asthma interventions and sustainable payment systems. NEAIC is a multi-state initiative that includes nine health care providers, six Medicaid payers, and policy makers in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Vermont, and is a project of Health Resources in Action’s (HRiA) Asthma Regional Council of New England. NEAIC providers employ the following: 1) Asthma self-management education 2) Environmental assessment with provision of minor-to-moderate environmental supplies to reduce asthma triggers; and 3) Use of community health workers.

The targeted population is high-cost Medicaid and CHIP pediatric patients (2 – 17 years), with a focus on those with uncontrolled symptoms that have a history of using expensive urgent care. The three-year program, focused on prevention, will include the following components to be measured:

1. Workforce development: In an effort to promote a high-quality, well-trained workforce, NEAIC: a) provides scholarships for Asthma Training Institutes to increase the number of well qualified cost-effective provider; b) provides core training and asthma specific training for community health workers (CHWs); and c) explore and make recommendations for an innovative CHW asthma credentialing program that payers and provider practices across NE have requested and can benefit from. All of this will contribute to higher quality and culturally competent care, and we believe will help to support innovative Medicaid reimbursement as a result of demonstrated cost-effective outcomes.

2. Rapid service delivery expansion for over 1100 high-risk children with asthma in CT, RI, MA, and VT for home visiting services to provide asthma self-management education, environmental assessments, and environmental supplies to control triggers;

3. Committed Medicaid payers in several New England states will work to sustain these cost-effective programs by piloting reimbursement methodologies with the service providers, should the service model results demonstrate the CMMI three-part aims.

4. A Payer and Provider Learners Community across all six New England states to rapidly dissemiate demonstrated improvements to the quality and cost of asthma care, share viable reimbursement systems developed, successfully incorporate CHWs into the asthma care team, and disseminate best practices. The Learners Community builds on ARC’s existing networks and partnerships across the region, and is meant to increase awareness about these successful models with the goal of broader adoption across New England.

NEAIC’s components build in continuous quality improvement measures through rigorous data collection/analysis, strong partnerships, and commitments from interested payers and policy makers. The establishment and promotion of CHWs as strong health care delivery partners addressing environmental conditions as part and parcel of the disease management program -- with reimbursement by payers -- make this an innovative model for broad dissemination and potential for replication across the nation.

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The NEAIC Intervention is home visiting services to provide asthma self-management education, environmental assessments, and environmental remediation supplies. The intervention is three – four visits and is provided by either: 1) A CHW, overseen by an asthma nurse; 2) A pair of providers: a CHW and an AE-C for the first visit; and up to two subsequent follow-up visits will be made by the CHW alone. Patients are enrolled in the interventions for up to six consecutive months. Home visits will include: educating families on asthma basics and expectations for control using an evidence-based curriculum; reviewing asthma action plans and self-management techniques; educating the family about, and assessing the home for, environmental allergens/asthma triggers; offering advice and tools for the family to develop an environmental action plan; delivering cost-effective supplies to help families remEDIATE environmental health threats (such as pillow/mattress covers to contain dust mites, HEPA vacuums); making appropriate referrals for needed social services; and periodically reviewing needs and progress on plan implementation.

NEAIC Partners include six Medicaid payer organizations, including four nonprofit managed care organizations; state and federal policymakers, including all six CDC-funded asthma programs in New England departments of health; four workforce development partners; and nine provider partners. In addition to HRiA, partners they include:

Clinical Providers
- Boston Children’s Hospital (Boston, MA)
- Baystate Children’s Hospital (Springfield, MA)
- Boston Medical Center (Boston, MA)
- Children’s Medical Group (Hamden, CT)
- Middlesex Hospital (Middletown, CT)
- Rhode Island Hospital / Hasbro Children’s Hospital (Providence, RI)
- Rutland Regional Medical Center (Rutland, VT)
- St. Joseph’s Health Clinic (Providence, RI)
- Thundermist (Woonsocket, RI)

Workforce Development Partners
- Central Massachusetts Area Health Education Center of Central MA, Outreach Worker Training Institute (Worcester, MA)
- American Lung Association of the Northeast (Waltham, MA)
- Boston Public Health Commission, Community Health Education Center (Boston, MA)
- Massachusetts Association of Community Health Workers (Worcester, MA)

Medicaid Payers
- BMC Healthnet Plan (Boston, MA)
- Department of Vermont Health Access (Williston, VT)
- Community Health Network/ Department of Social Services (Hartford, CT)
- Health New England (Springfield, MA)
- Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island (Providence, RI)
- Neighborhood Health Plan of Massachusetts (Boston, MA)