

Research in Transforming Health and Healthcare Systems: 2020 Grantee Overview

Background

For many state Medicaid programs, identifying and addressing enrollees' social needs is a growing priority. In 2020, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) awarded seven grants to support studies examining how states are using their payment and contracting strategies to incentivize or require Medicaid managed care organizations to undertake activities that identify and respond to enrollees' social needs. The studies examine a range of issues related to how these strategies and activities are being implemented and the impact on enrollees, plans, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders.

A brief summary of each project follows. Full details about the grants are available by clicking on the grant titles below.

Study Spotlights

Examining the Role of State-MCO Contractual Mandates/Incentives and a Social Services Referral Program in Addressing Social Determinants of Health

Samuel Opoku, MBChB, Ph.D.; Charles Owens, M.S.A.

Georgia Southern University Research and Service Foundation

This project will conduct qualitative telephone interviews with leadership or subject matter experts from managed care organizations (MCOs) in eight states and will partner with WellCare's Community Connections program to evaluate the program's impact on health care utilization, cost, satisfaction and health equity in these eight states using a differences-in-differences quantitative study design.

Assessing Oregon's Efforts to Increase Investments to Address Social Determinants of Health and Health Equity

John McConnell, Ph.D.

Oregon Health & Science University

This project will review documents including coordinated care organizations (CCO) contracts and administrative rules to gain a detailed understanding of Oregon's new contracting mechanisms and CCOs' plans to meet new requirements.

Supporting the Implementation and Disseminating the Learnings of North Carolina's Healthy Opportunities Pilots

Robert Saunders, Ph.D.; William Bleser, Ph.D., M.S.P.H.

Duke University

This project will conduct case studies on four early innovators and exemplars in North Carolina's Health Opportunities Pilots initiative, such as human services organizations or other care management entities.

Community Health Worker MCO Population Health Strategy (CHaMPS) Evaluation

Ashley Wennerstrom, Ph.D.

LSU Health Sciences Center-New Orleans

This project will conduct interviews and focus groups with representatives of several stakeholder groups, including Medicaid enrollees served by the state's MCOs; community health workers or other providers responsible for conducting health needs assessments or implementing population health strategies; state health officials; MCO leaders; and leaders of community-based organizations.

Medicaid Managed Care Organizational Strategies to Address Enrollee Unmet Social Needs Using Community Partnerships

Rachel Hogg-Graham, Dr.P.H.; Teresa Meyer Waters, Ph.D.

University of Kentucky Research Foundation

This project will use the Process Framework for Public Health Collaboratives to guide the research strategy as they apply a mixed methods approach to examine the development, evolution and impact of partnerships between Kentucky managed care organizations and local community-based organizations.

Improving California's Medicaid Program by Addressing Social Determinants of Health for Children

Mayra Alvarez, M.H.A.; Kristen Golden Testa, M.S., Indivar Dutta-Gupta, B.A.

The Children's Partnership

This project will first identify current gaps/disparities in Medi-Cal, California's Medicaid program, in terms of addressing children's social and emotional needs and will then determine promising practices for health systems and health plans to engage, learn from, and integrate support services from community partners and non-traditional/non-clinical providers into Medi-Cal's delivery of care to advance the social/emotional needs of children and families in California communities.

How Medicaid Managed Care Contracts Can Impact Community Health Centers' Services that Address Social Determinants of Health

Peter Shin, Ph.D., M.P.H.

The George Washington University

This project will review Medicaid managed care organization contracts to identify and catalog key characteristics and attributes related to social determinants of health, care coordination and management, and enabling services. The researchers will then conduct case studies in five states whose contract terms vary in their strategies for addressing social determinants of health, focusing on the experiences of state officials, MCO leaders, and network providers, including community health centers and private pediatric and adult medicine practices.