

Idaho Primary Care Association Receives Commonwealth Fund Grant to Transform Safety-Net Clinics into Patient-Centered Medical Homes

Boise, ID, May 12, 2009 -- The Idaho Primary Care Association (IPCA) has been selected to serve as one of five Regional Coordinating Centers (RCC) across the nation for the Safety Net Medical Home Initiative by the Commonwealth Fund and Qualis Health. IPCA will receive \$500,000 over the course of the four-year initiative to work with 13 Idaho safety-net primary care clinics to facilitate their transformation into Patient-Centered Medical Homes.

The four-year initiative builds on the work of the Governor's Select Committee on Health Care and will include work with the safety-net primary care clinics to help them reach high benchmark levels of quality, efficiency, and patient experience.

"My goal with the Select Committee was to identify needs and strategies while building coalitions between the public and private sectors to make health care more accessible and affordable for all Idahoans. This program moves us in the right direction," Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter said.

On a parallel track, a group of stakeholders representing the Governor's Office, Idaho legislators, payers, and health policy leaders will work to transform reimbursement policy for medical home services.

"This is exciting news for Idaho and our community health centers. This grant provides an opportunity to define and develop 'medical homes' in rural and urban areas in the state. Patient-centered medical homes are critical in providing health care to uninsured Idahoans and reducing overall health care costs." said Senator Dean Cameron (R), co-chairman of the Legislative Health Care Task Force and co-chairman of JFAC.

The parent organizations of the 13 partner clinics include Idaho State University Family Medicine Residency in Pocatello; Family Medicine Residency of Idaho in Boise; Terry Reilly Health Services in Nampa; Health West, Inc. in Pocatello; and St. Mary's and Clearwater Valley Hospitals and Clinics in Orofino and Cottonwood.

The patient-centered medical home is a model of primary care in which patients receive well-coordinated services and enhanced access to a clinical team, and clinicians use decision support tools, measure their performance, and conduct quality improvement activities to meet patients' needs. The model holds promise not only for improving clinical quality and patients' experiences, but also for reducing health system costs. Commonwealth Fund research demonstrates that most racial disparities in health care are significantly reduced when patients have a medical home.

A member of the grant's stakeholder committee, Representative John Rusche, (D), Lewiston said, "This is great news. The grant will help develop and test the medical home concept for more rural areas like Idaho. This will help meet the need for good, continuous, low-cost healthcare. It supports changes we made this year to our Idaho indigent healthcare program. I am excited--it is very timely."

Qualis Health, a Seattle-based quality improvement organization, will provide support to the RCC and clinics to improve quality of care. "While many of the of the participating community health centers and other safety net clinics have implemented creative innovations to provide high quality, cost effective, patient-centered care, all have identified --- and are committed to closing --- gaps between their current systems and the best achievable performance," said Jonathan Sugarman, M.D., the principal investigator and president and CEO of Qualis Health.

Working closely with the MacColl Institute for Healthcare Innovation, Qualis Health will support the clinics' efforts to improve coordination of information between primary care and specialty care or community services, use information technology to identify patients with unmet needs and improve care for those with chronic conditions.

The Safety Net Medical Home Initiative is sponsored by The Commonwealth Fund. The Commonwealth Fund is joined in support of the project by eight co-funders, including Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health (www.bcidahofoundation.org), the Colorado Health Foundation (www.coloradohealth.org), Jewish Healthcare Foundation (Pittsburgh)(www.jhf.org), Northwest Health Foundation (Portland, Oregon) (www.nwhf.org), Partners HealthCare (Boston) (www.partners.org), The Boston Foundation (www.tbf.org), Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation (www.bcbsmafoundation.org), and Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (Boston) (www.bidmc.org).

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