



Successful Practices in Accountable Care: Robust Use of Data and Information Health Choice Network

Company Profile

Name: Health Choice Network

Membership: 63 Safety Net Organizations in 21 States

Patients served: 1,014,481 Patients in 2017

Total Patient Visits: 3,892,63 in 2017

Mission: Delivering technology solutions to improve health outcomes.

Core Values: Integrity, Customer-Focused, Results Driven, Career Growth for Employees, and Work-Life Balance



Building a Business Strategy

Health centers face challenges every day. They are challenged to evolve and grow in a marketplace that is increasingly competitive. Surviving and thriving in this environment requires health centers to think strategically about how they are operating. One of the lessons health center controlled network Health Choice Network (HCN) has found in serving their 63 customers, including 27 health centers in nine states, is that thinking strategically about operations translates into building a business strategy. A business strategy should look at not just balance sheets and income statements, but should take a holistic approach that also includes looking at the local marketplace in a targeted manner. It also requires considering potential “competitors” such as private physicians who open urgent care centers nearby. There are lessons that can be learned by comparing health centers to their peers.

One of the lessons Health Choice Network learned in assisting their members in building business strategies

is to “invest in the best”. Based on the 330 grant funding, capital improvement funding, quality improvement grants, Federal Tort Claims Act coverage and 340B benefits, health centers have many opportunities to make strategic investment in human and technical resources that can assist them in providing high quality, comprehensive care. Because of the funding health centers receive, they should be the best in quality and have the best resources. Those resources should support the business strategy and allow health centers to continuously improve, market their services, and as a result assist health centers in achieving the quadruple aim.

Demonstrating Return on Investment

As health centers face challenging times, they are increasingly being asked to demonstrate the return on investment they are able to provide for the resources they receive from partners. Health Choice Network supports their members in using data and information to answer

those questions. Cost data in particular has been helpful as health centers, in comparison to the local emergency room, are less expensive. Health Choice Network is able to use the data obtained from centers to help make this point to health center partners- like insurers. With this information, insurers are paying rates that are competitive in the local marketplace.

The data also demonstrates a return in the quality of care that health centers are able to provide. For example, in 2018, all of the Health Choice Network members received HRSA quality awards. Health centers able to capitalize on the data they receive to improve quality of care are able to in turn demonstrate a greater Return on Investment. According to HCN, quality is more than the clinical metrics that the centers report. It should also take into consideration patient (or customer) feedback, such as the stars a patient awards on Google Maps or the review they leave on Yelp. Health centers should look to all types of information as they position themselves in the marketplace.

Addressing Workforce Concerns

A core value of HCN is “we facilitate career growth for our employees.” They state, “our continued success requires us to provide the opportunity for education and development needed to help our employees grow. We will take advantage of those opportunities and keep learning to improve our skills and produce high quality work.” HCN believes investing in staff at all levels is a key component of accountable care and paying staff well, plus incentivizing with benefits, results in high quality care.

There are also ways to address potential issues before they arise if data is trended to predict a problem before it occurs. With good, clean data and the ability to compare information over time, potential issues can be spotted and

solutions can be planned. For example, data analysis can show issues with team make up or reporting structures. It can identify individuals that need training or additional assistance.

Training and assistance is also key to the success of health centers going forward, as is succession planning. Increasingly the data is showing issues of provider burnout. Succession planning can ensure continuity as provider burnout is addressed. Accountable care also requires providers and staff working at the top of their license and additional investment in training can help to achieve that goal. It can also have a direct impact on the return on investment with training on topics such as customer service and workflow operations.

Going Forward: Future of Data for Providers of Choice

Health centers are continuously aiming to be providers of choice. Not only does this require a culture and mindset shift through asking questions and challenging the status quo, but it requires thinking strategically about the data that they obtain and how they utilize it. One example is using data to address care gaps. Based on Health Choice Network’s experience, addressing care gaps requires a tactical approach. Similar to demonstrating return on investment, it is wise to assign a cost to missed opportunities for care. The math to determine the cost takes into consideration known data factors such as touch points, hourly benefits and salary, information technology infrastructure cost per user. For no show appointments, health centers can factor in potential Prospective Payment System rates. It is not just about the amount billed. The cost calculation considers incidental expenses. For Health Choice Network they are able to utilize the data they have to create formulas in a dashboard and show the impact of missed opportunities. These dashboards help health centers to be strategic in addressing care gaps.

However, it also requires having robust data. Health Choice Network chooses to focus on Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS), rather than only Uniform Data System or Patient Centered Medical Home. They chose this focus because it requires billing, collecting, coding, and documenting as interrelated factors rather than a singular focus. Having interrelated factors in their data makes it more accurate, comprehensive, and cohesive resulting in more robust information. With that data, health centers are able to address gaps in care, workforce concerns, and demonstrate return on investment.

The one area in which Health Choice Network sees challenges in data is the timeliness of receiving the data. Many health centers have to rely on out of date data, from

months before, that doesn't allow them to be innovative and adaptive. For health centers seeking to improve population health, enhance the patient experience, improve provider satisfaction, and reduce cost, they need to have data that allows them to be responsive and continuously improve. In order to be responsive, they need to have data that is as close to real-time, or immediate, as possible.

With real-time, robust data utilized strategically, health centers can be providers of choice that provide high-quality comprehensive care, regardless of ability to pay. Health Choice Network helps their members to deliver on the mission of the health center program and drive towards the future through the use of robust data and information.

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