

MARYLAND HEALTH CARE COMMISSION

UPDATE OF ACTIVITIES

November 2021

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

Government Relations and Special Projects - Tracey DeShields

State Policy Update

The Advance Directives Workgroup has had three workgroup meetings and two subgroup meetings. The final workgroup meeting was held on December 1, 2021. The workgroup has narrowed in on possible recommendations to present to the Senate Finance and House Health and Government Operations Committees for possible compromise legislation in the 2022 legislative session.

The HSCRC requested staff feedback on a second revision of the report on the Hospital at Home model due to the legislature in January. This report is done in collaboration with MHCC, Medicaid, and the Office of Healthcare Quality (OHCQ). This report is due to the legislature in January.

MHCC-related news coverage: selected articles and commentary

Health Facilities

Adventist HealthCare Fort Washington Medical Center. "Adventist expands surgical options, access to innovative technology in Prince George's Co." WTOP News. November 22, 2021. Available from: <https://wtop.com/adventist-healthcare/2021/11/adventist-expands-surgical-options-access-to-innovative-technology-in-prince-georges-co/>

Ash, S. "UMES names interim Vice President for Strategic Initiatives." WMDT ABC47. November 2, 2021. Available from: <https://www.wmdt.com/2021/11/umes-names-interim-vice-president-for-strategic-initiatives/>

Belt, D. "MD hospital safety ratings: 9 'A' grades, 1 'D' grade on list." Patch. November 10, 2021. Available from: <https://patch.com/maryland/baltimore/md-hospital-safety-ratings-9-grades-1-d-grade-list>

Bologna, G. "UMD will use \$18M donation to expand health care access, scholarships on Eastern Shore." Baltimore Business Journal. November 5, 2021. Available from: <https://www.bizjournals.com/baltimore/news/2021/11/05/umb-donation-expand-health-care-eastern-shore.html>

Bowman, T. "How Maryland responded to hospitals at capacity." EMS1. November 29, 2021. Available from: <https://www.ems1.com/patient-care/articles/how-maryland-responded-to-hospitals-at-capacity-oqmRbmUpdWqtWsaU/>

Davis, P. "Shortage of inpatient beds in Maryland psychiatric hospitals is putting children at risk, officials worry." The Baltimore Sun. November 3, 2021. Available from: <https://www.baltimoresun.com/health/bs-md-cr-juvenile-detention-psychiatric-care-20211103-wcidebu7unhzipaf2fg7ix5hrri-story.html>

Roberts, A. "Frederick County Health Department maintains national accreditation status." Frederick News Post. November 14, 2021. Available from: https://www.fredericknews.com/news/health/frederick-county-health-department-maintains-national-accreditation-status/article_0afdd4db-91a4-5851-9fc7-0f552a93e358.html

Stulick, A. "Maryland nursing home adds palliative service line." Skilled Nursing News. November 3, 2021. Available from: <https://skillednursingnews.com/2021/11/maryland-nursing-home-adds-palliative-service-line/>

Health Disparities and Health Equity

McManus, K. "Study to begin on health disparities among Frederick County's African-American population." Frederick County Health Department. November 10, 2021. Available from: <https://www.wfmd.com/2021/11/10/study-to-begin-on-health-disparities-among-frederick-countys-african-american-population/>

Wiggins, O. “University of Maryland Medical System drops race-based algorithm officials say harms Black patients.” The Washington Post. November 17, 2021. Available from: https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/md-politics/maryland-hospital-black-diagnostic-test-kidneys/2021/11/17/e69edcfc-4711-11ec-b05d-3cb9d96eb495_story.html

Cybersecurity

A.R. Cabral Capital News Service. “Cybersecurity concerns grow in Maryland hospitals.” Cumberland Times News. November 1, 2021. Available from: https://www.times-news.com/news/local_news/cybersecurity-concerns-grow-in-maryland-hospitals/article_d222eea8-3a82-11ec-97bd-5b3efe47b9b0.html

Medical Debt

Rhee, K. “Combating medical debt for Marylanders: the virtual forum that can help residents struggling to pay medical bills.” Local DVM. November 20, 2021. Available from: <https://www.localdvm.com/news/maryland/combating-medical-debt-for-marylanders-the-virtual-forum-that-can-help-residents-struggling-to-pay-medical-bills/>

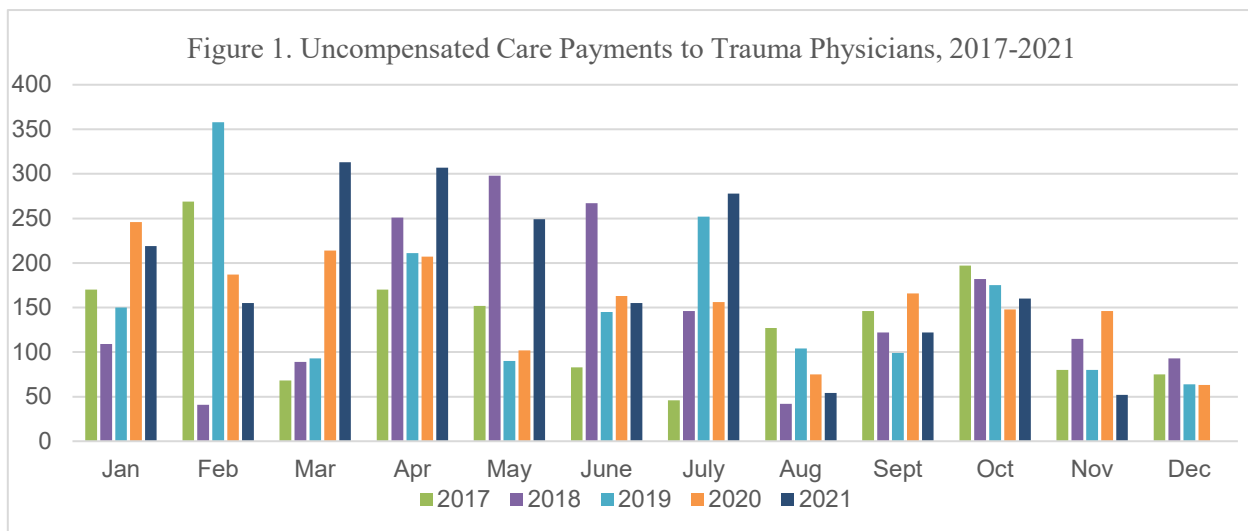
Maryland Trauma Physician Services Fund

Uncompensated Care Processing

Trustmark Health Benefits, the third-party administrator (TPA) for the Trauma Fund, processed \$52,580.21 for uncompensated care claims through November 2021.

Trauma Equipment Grants

Staff has begun the process to award trauma equipment grants to the seven (7) eligible trauma centers. For the Fiscal Year 22-23 grant cycle MHCC is permitted to award approximately \$200,000 allowing each center to receive \$28,572. It is anticipated that all eligible centers will receive the grants funds by mid-January 2022.



Due to security event at the Maryland Department of Health, website analytics are incomplete for this month. Reporting will resume in January.

MHCC Website

The MHCC website (<https://MHCC.maryland.gov>) had 2,372 users in the month of November.

Wear The Cost

In the month of November, 959 users visited the site.

The Maryland Health Care Quality Reports

The Maryland Health Care Quality Reports website had 2,296 users, 3,037 sessions and 4,491 pageviews in November. The average session duration was 1 minute and 42 seconds. The site receives the most website referrals from MHCC's homepage (59.2%).

Facebook continues to be the primary referral social media source, accounting for 41.2% of all social referrals and LinkedIn was the second highest source of social media referrals for the month, accounting for 29.4% of referrals.

CENTER FOR ANALYSIS AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The Board of Public Works approved the award of the Data Management for the Maryland Medical Care Data Base (MCDB) contract on December 1, 2021. The seven-year contract was awarded to Onpoint Health Data, Portland Maine. The total contract value was 15,467,744. Onpoint was ranked first overall in the review, it scored highest on the technical review and was ranked second lowest on price. Under the contract, Onpoint will migrate the existing data and database infrastructure from the incumbent vendor, Social and Scientific Systems to OnPoint's Claim Manager platform, manage data collection from commercial payors (including health plans and prescription benefit managers), conduct claims editing and analysis, provide datasets and reports including access to State-approved users, maintain and update the "Wear The Cost" website, and integrate the State-designated HIE's encrypted patient ID with the MCDB.

The MHCC sought and received the BPW's authorization to begin the new contract with Onpoint prior to the BPW approval on December 1 because the existing contract with SSS ends on December 31, 2021. The BPW is typically reluctant to approve such retroactive contracts. MHCC staff argued that the tight time windows and the extended review period due to the multiple competitive bids warranted the BPW's approval. Further, the new contract specified that the new contractor would have a 60-day transition-in period. Had MHCC waited until after BPW approval on December 1 to begin the contract with OnPoint, we would have had to extend the SSS contract for up to two additional months. The delay would have complicated commercial health plans data submission in the first quarter of 2022.

The MHCC held introductory meetings for Onpoint with commercial payers, HSCRC, and Medicaid and its Hilltop Institute consultants over the last month. The stakeholders have been supportive of the transition. MHCC has reminded the commercial payors that timelines for submission will be tightened once Onpoint starts the data acquisition effort in the first quarter of 2022. MHCC believes enforcing deadlines are critical if MHCC is to meet its commitments to State-partners. Onpoint has provided evidence based on its experience in nine other states that commercial payers can meet our deadlines. Many of the national payers that are submitters in other states and therefore familiar with Onpoint processes are also submitters in Maryland.

CENTER FOR HEALTH CARE FACILITIES PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Acute Care Policy and Planning – Eileen Fleck

Certificates of Ongoing Performance

On November 18, 2021, the Commission approved a Certificate of Ongoing Performance for the University of Maryland Shore Medical Center at Easton's provision of percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) services (Docket No. 20-20-CP034). It also approved a Certificate of Ongoing Performance for Adventist HealthCare White Oak Medical Center's provision of PCI services (Docket No. 19-15-CP032). Both PCI programs were certified for a period of four years.

Long Term Care Policy and Planning – Linda Cole

Minimum Data Set (MDS)

An updated Request for Proposals designed to address MHCC's analytical needs related to the federal MDS for nursing homes, and to provide analytic support for the MHCC Long-Term Care Survey data set, has been developed. The draft RFP has now been submitted to the Procurement Review Group within the Maryland Department of Health.

Home Health Agency 2022 CON Review Schedule

Five jurisdictions have been identified as having a need for additional home health agency (HHA) service providers: Carroll, Dorchester, Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester Counties. The Commission has designated a Lower Eastern Shore region as the applicable geographic area for a review cycle covering the latter four jurisdictions. Carroll County is offered as a single jurisdiction for a second review cycle. Notice of the HHA CON review schedule was published in the November 19, 2021 issue of the *Maryland Register*. The HHA CON review schedule has also been posted on the Commission's website and may be found at this link https://mhcc.maryland.gov/mhcc/pages/hcfs/hcfs_con/documents/hha%20schedule_20211119.pdf MHCC staff contacted the following associations to apprise them of the 2022 HHA CON review schedule: the Maryland National Capital Homecare Association; the Maryland Hospital Association; LifeSpan; the Health Facilities Association of Maryland; and LeadingAge of Maryland.

Long Term Care Survey

Processing of the FY2020 Medicaid Cost Report data set for merger with the FY2020 Long-Term Care Survey data set has been completed.

Chronic Hospital Project- Update of COMAR 10.24.08

On November 23, 2021, staff met with staff of the two state chronic hospitals, Deer's Head Hospital Center and Western Maryland Hospital Center, to discuss topics that would help us update the chronic hospital chapter of the state health plan. The topics covered included: the role of the state-owned chronic hospitals; chronic hospital licensure (dual license requirements); specialty hospital designation; payment structure/CMS payment model or HSCRC rate structure; CMS Survey requirements; and bed inventory and bed occupancy rates.

Home Health Survey

Data collection for the FY 2020 Home Health Agency Survey was completed in October and, in the past month, staff has been cleaning and processing the data set.

Certificate of Need – Wynee Hawk

Change to an Approved CON Authorized

Adventist Rehabilitation Hospital of Maryland, Inc. d/b/a Adventist HealthCare Rehabilitation – Docket No. 18-15-2428

An increase in the project budget of \$2,997,052, which will be funded with cash. The approved project cost increased from \$19,547,323 to \$22,544,375 (15.3%).

CON Letters of Intent

Surgery Center at Frederick Health Village, LLC – (Frederick County)

Establish an ambulatory surgery center with four operating rooms and four procedure rooms to be located at 1 Frederick Health Way, in Frederick.

Pre-Application Conference

Surgery Center at Frederick Health Village, LLC – (Frederick County)

November 17, 2021

First Use Approvals

Gilchrist Hospice Care – (Baltimore County) – Docket No. 17-24-2412

Relocation of a 22-bed inpatient hospice facility, located at 828 North Eutaw Street, to Stadium Place on East 33rd Street in the City of Baltimore. The new, two-story, 26,500 square foot building, is located within the Govans Ecumenical Development Corporation planned community and relocates and replaces the Gilchrist Joseph Richey inpatient hospice facility. The facility will be operated under the Gilchrist Hospice Care-Joseph Richey House license (H1526) and the Gilchrist Center-Joseph Richey license (H514) will be terminated.

Approved Cost: \$10,328,950

Determinations of Coverage

- **Ambulatory Surgery Centers**

Greenbelt Ambulatory Surgery, LP - (Prince George’s County)

Establish an ambulatory surgery center (ASC) with one sterile operating room and one non-sterile procedure room to be located at 7809 Belle Point Drive, in Greenbelt.

Washington Surgery Center, LLC - (Montgomery County)

Establish an ASC with two non-sterile procedure rooms to be located at 11272 Georgia Avenue, in Wheaton.

- **Acquisition/Change of Ownership**

MedStar Health Endoscopy Center-Silver Spring - (Montgomery County)

Change in ownership of an ASC with two non-sterile procedure rooms. Post-transaction, the owners of the ASC will be MedStar Ambulatory Services (80%) and David Doman, M.D. (20%).

Capital Endoscopy, LLC – d/b/a MedStar Surgery Center at Takoma Park – (Montgomery County)

Change in ownership of an ASC. This change occurred on March 1, 2019 so timely notification of the change in ownership was not provided. The facility, post-transaction, is owned by Capital Endoscopy, LLC, which is owned by MedStar Ambulatory Services (51.00%) and seven physicians.

- **Licensure**

Delicensure of Bed Capacity or a Health Care Facility

Edenwald – (Baltimore County)

Temporary delicensure of 22 comprehensive care facility (CCF) beds, leaving 70 licensed beds

The Village at Augsburg – (Baltimore County)

Temporary delicensure of 24 CCF beds, leaving 107 licensed beds

- **“Waiver” Beds**

Elkton Nursing & Rehabilitation Center – (Cecil County)

Addition of five CCF beds, yielding a total bed capacity of 182 beds

Pending Notices of Acquisition/Change of Ownership for Comprehensive Care Facilities (Nursing Homes)

North Oaks Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCF operates as Autumn Ridge at North Oaks) - (Baltimore County)

Transaction: Acquisition of assets

CURRENT

Owner of the real property: North Oaks Real Estate Partnership

Owner of bed rights: North Oaks Partnership

POST-TRANSACTION

Owner of the real property: Wilson Lane Realty, LLC

Operator and owner of bed rights post-transaction: North Oaks Communities, LLC

Purchase price: \$32,000,000

Additional information: The CCF has a bed capacity of 37 beds and is located at 723 Mount Wilson Lane, in Pikesville. Post-transaction, the owners of the real property, North Oaks Real Estate Partnership will become Wilson Lane Realty, LLC, owned by Michael Biderman (60%) and Ephram M. Lahasky (40%). The owners of both the bed rights (North Oaks Partnership) and the operations (Life Care Services, LLC) will become North Oaks Communities, LLC, owned by Michael Biderman (50%) and Akiko Ike (50%). This acquisition is anticipated to close on December 26, 2021, pending a review by the Department of Aging.

Commission staff notes that CCFs operated by entities associated with the persons acquiring North Oaks have below average or poor ratings (composite scores of One or Two Stars out of five) on the CMS Nursing Home Compare Five-Star Quality Rating System, both in and outside of Maryland. Additionally, a Nursing Home Administrator at a Pennsylvania CCF owned in part by Mr. Lahasky is under Federal indictment on charges of health care fraud. Ten out-of-state facilities owned in part by Mr. Lahasky have been flagged by CMS for abuse or as Special Focus Facilities. Although the acquiring entities have met the notification requirements for an acquisition, it is notable that the track record of the persons acquiring this CCF would probably fail to meet the requirements for docketing of a CON application to establish or expand a CCF under the State Health Plan Quality Rating standard [COMAR 10.24.20.05A(8)].

Acquisition of Autumn Ridge at North Oaks (North Oaks) and Chestnut Green Health Center at Blakehurst (Blakehurst) - (Baltimore County)

Transaction: Acquisition of assets

CURRENT

Owner of the real property: No changes at the ground level

Owner of bed rights: No changes at the ground level

POST-TRANSACTION

Owner: No changes at the ground level

Operator and owner of bed rights: No changes at the ground level

Purchase price: \$250,000 for Autumn Ridge at North Oaks (being conveyed to a third-party) and \$5M for Chestnut Green Health Center

Additional information: Change in ownership at the senior level of both CCFs. Bed capacity is 37 beds and 44 beds respectively. North Oaks is located at 723 Mount Wilson Lane in Pikesville and Blakehurst is located at 1055 West Joppa Road in Towson. Life Care Companies, LLC is the current indirect owner of both CCFs and after the acquisition this will change to LCS Holding Company, LLC (LCS Holding Company). Redwood Capital Investments will purchase a majority and controlling interest in LCS Holding Company. This acquisition is anticipated to close on December 27, 2021.

Ravenwood Nursing Care Center – (Washington County)

Transaction: Acquisition of assets

CURRENT

Owner of the real property, owner of the bed rights and operator of the facility: Diakon Lutheran Senior Living, Maryland, LLC

POST-TRANSACTION

Owner of the real property and beds rights: 1183 Luther Drive, LLC

Operator of the facility: Creekside SNF Operating Company, LLC
Purchase Price: \$15,850,000

Pleasant View Nursing Home – (Carroll County)

Transaction: Acquisition of assets

CURRENT

Owner of the real property – Jackson, Jackson & Tabler Limited Partnership

Current Owner of the Bed Rights and Operator – Pleasant View Nursing Home of Mt.Airy

POST-TRANSACTION

Owner of the real property and beds rights: OHI Asset (MD) Mount Airy, LLC

Operator of the facility: Old National Leasing Co, LLC CommuniCare

Purchase Price: \$8,000,000

CENTER FOR HEALTH INFORMATION & INNOVATIVE CARE DELIVERY

Health Information Technology Division – Nikki Majewski, Division Chief

Telehealth Study

Guidance was provided to the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) in finalizing the telehealth study (study) literature review protocol. The literature review will inform development of six study briefing papers. A near final draft of the provider survey was completed; survey questions will be vetted with select providers in December. NORC was competitively selected to complete the study required by Chapter 70 (House Bill 123) and Chapter 71 (Senate Bill 3) *Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021* of the 2021 Laws of Maryland (LOM). A report is due to the Senate Finance Committee and House Health and Government Operations Committee by December 1, 2022.

Legislative Activities

Preliminary discussions are underway with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to develop regulations required by Chapter 229 (Senate Bill 166) and Chapter 230 (House Bill 512) *Drugs and Devices – Electronic Prescriptions – Controlled Dangerous Substances* of the 2020 LOM. The law requires MDH to adopt regulations for issuance of a waiver in collaboration with MHCC. In addition, a draft briefing paper was completed on the availability of funding and sustainability of the technical infrastructure required by Chapter 790 (House Bill 1022) and Chapter 791 (Senate Bill 748) *Public Health – State Designated Exchange – Clinical Information* of the 2021 LOM. An update is due to the Governor and General Assembly by January 1, 2022.

Patient Generated Health Data

An environmental scan (scan) was completed of state-level protections for health-related data electronically recorded by patients outside of a clinical setting. The scan identified eight states with legislation for the privacy and security of patient generated health data (PGHD). Direct-to-consumer health technologies often lack HIPAA-equivalent safeguards, which can result in selling or sharing data without users' consent or knowledge, differences in breach response, and re-identifying data. Preparations are underway for development of PGHD provider and consumer education material that overviews privacy and security considerations.

Hospital Assessment

Planning activities continue for the 2022 *Hospital Health Information Technology Assessment*. Draft survey questions were identified that assess how hospitals are using health information technology and the perceived impact on health equity. The survey will also include questions about the integration of PGHD into electronic health records (EHRs). The survey is targeted for release in January.

Nursing Home Assessment

Eight interviews were conducted with select nursing home representatives inquiring how use of EHRs has evolved to support care management and transitional care in nursing homes. Interviews consisted of chain and non-chain nursing homes representing approximately 60 locations in the State. A thematic analysis is underway of data obtained from representatives and responses to MHCC's Annual Long Term Care Survey. An insights brief is targeted for release in January.

Cybersecurity Webinar

Preparations have begun for a February ambulatory provider cybersecurity webinar. The webinar will overview best practices for mitigating cyber risks and key considerations for selecting cyber liability insurance coverage. Promotional activities with various health care associations are anticipated to begin in January. Staff is exploring opportunities to offer continuing medical education credits for this event.

Electronic Data Interchange

Planning is progressing for the 2022 Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) Progress Report. COMAR 10.25.09, *Requirements for Payers to Designate Electronic Health Networks*, requires payers with a premium volume of \$1 million or more to submit census-related data on administrative health care transactions annually by June 30th. Approximately 40 payers will submit an EDI Progress Report in 2022. The EDI progress report is scheduled for release in March 2022.

Innovative Care Delivery Division – Melanie Cavaliere, Division Chief

Advanced Care Delivery

Practice Transformation Grant Activities

Practice recruitment for the *Advancing Practice Transformation in Ambulatory Practices* program was completed. The grantee, MedChi Care Transformation Organization, received approximately 64 primary care and specialty practice applications. The application review and selection process is targeted for completion in December. Participating practices will complete the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Transforming Clinical Practice Initiative Readiness Assessment Tool to identify where practices are on the practice transformation continuum.

Practice Transformation Network

An environmental scan continues of practices that participated in the CMS Practice Transformation Network (PTN) initiative (2016–2019). The scan assesses transformation progress and participation in value-based care (VBC) delivery models since the PTN concluded. Preparations are underway for a practice roundtable (roundtable) event to discuss how select activities of the PTN helped practices achieve transformation. The roundtable is targeted to occur in January.

Health Equity Study

Support activities continue for a practice recruitment webinar in collaboration with the Maryland Center for Health Equity at the University of Maryland, School of Public Health (SPH). The webinar is aimed at recruiting select practices to participate in a telehealth health equity study underway by the SPH. The purpose of the study is to engage primary care providers in select communities to share their telehealth experience in care delivery with Black and Hispanic populations during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Learning Networks

Staff hosted an ambulatory provider webinar focused on awareness building of advanced care delivery and payment models. The webinar included two national experts that discussed various VBC models and team approaches to managing high-risk and high-utilizer patients. The session was convened in collaboration with the Health Services Cost Review Commission and MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society. Development continues for a webinar on innovative strategies for team-based care. Staff presented on MHCC's telehealth initiatives at the 2021 North American Primary Care Research Group Annual Meeting.

Health Information Exchange Division – Alana Sutherland, Division Chief

Privacy and Security Regulations

The health information exchange (HIE) Policy Board (workgroup) convened to discuss proposed modifications recommended by Post & Schell, P.C. (contractor) to COMAR 10.25.18 *Health Information Exchanges: Privacy and Security of Protected Health Information* (regulations). The workgroup considered additional changes in sections .03 through .05 of the regulations, which contains 12 sections. The workgroup is expected to convene monthly through February.

Consumer Consent Management

Testing of the CRISP consumer consent management utility (CMU) interface is underway with three HIEs operating in Maryland. Testing is expected to be completed in December; interface testing with the remaining HIEs is anticipated to occur in January. Chapter 798 (House Bill 1375) *Health Information Exchanges – Electronic Health Information – Sharing and Disclosure* of the 2021 LOM requires the State-Designated HIE to develop a centralized approach for consumers to opt-out or opt back into electronic health information exchange. Design activities for a CMU provider and consumer education and awareness initiative is underway.

HIE Roundtable Symposium

Groundwork for an HIE Roundtable (roundtable) continues in collaboration with Civitas Networks for Health (Civitas), a national HIE association. A series of roundtable events will be convened in 2022 bringing together states and HIE representatives to discuss key HIE policy issues and opportunities to advance HIE. The roundtable will also consider best practices related to privacy and security.

CENTER FOR QUALITY MEASUREMENT AND REPORTING

The Maryland Quality Reporting (MQR) website

MQR Website Updates

Staff continue to work with Advanta Government Services (AGS), the website contractor, to update the newly redesigned website. Routine updates and maintenance are ongoing. The next update is scheduled for mid-December and will include refreshed data for hospitals, nursing homes and home health agencies. The Long Term Care Planning Toolkit page is anticipated to be available to consumers by late December. The health disparities section of the website now includes an interactive feature that allows consumers to view the top 25 common medical conditions by race and ethnicity.

MQR Website Traffic

Staff monitors traffic to the consumer site using Google Analytics software. Website traffic was eleven percent higher in November (2,296 users) compared to traffic from the previous month (2,061 users). The most frequently viewed topics on the MQR site include assisted living, nursing homes, and hospital price transparency.

MQR Website Promotion

Promotion of the MQR website is a Center priority. There were approximately 100 social media posts in November. Topics included Antibiotic Awareness Week, American Diabetes Month, National Hospice and Palliative Care Month, and general promotional posts for the MQR website. These topics generally coincide with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Health Observances or other important health related events and are designed to link readers back to the MQR website.

Staff also continue to engage with various communities in the state using the NextDoor social media platform. The most recent NextDoor posts provided information about National Influenza Vaccination Week, as well as about Health Plans during open enrollment. Engagement with the Health Plan post was high with users as they participated in poll questions and asked questions about the health plan information that is available on the Maryland Quality Reporting site.

The staff also continue to work with Maryland Public Television (MPT) to develop promotional options for increasing public awareness of the MQR website. A 30-second video advertisement is being finalized for the upcoming promotional campaign.

Hospital Quality Initiatives – Courtney Carta

Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grades

The Leapfrog Group assigns letter grades (A-F) to hospitals based on performance on various patient safety measures. Grades are assigned twice annually. There were fewer A grades in the Fall compared to the Spring and compared to the nation. About 61% of Maryland hospitals received an A or B. There continue to be fewer D and F grades compared to the nation.

Grade	Nat’l Fall 2021	MD Fall 2021 (n= 42)	MD Spring 2021 (n= 42)	MD Fall 2017* (n=44)
A	32%	9 (21%)	15 (35%)	1 (1%)
B	26%	17 (40%)	15 (35%)	7 (16%)
C	35%	15 (36%)	12 (28%)	27 (61%)
D	7%	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	8 (18%)
F	<1%	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)

*The first grading cycle for Maryland hospitals

HCAHPS Data Collection

Patient satisfaction measures across Maryland hospitals have remained historically lower than national averages. Starting in January 2022, MHCC will require acute care hospitals to begin submitting detailed Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) data. This will allow for a more thorough analysis of potential differences in patient satisfaction across race, ethnicity, and service lines (e.g., maternity, surgical, medical). Staff are developing technical specifications, data submission materials, and communications to distribute to hospitals prior to the new requirement taking effect. Staff hosted a webinar in November for hospitals in preparation for the new requirement.

Long Term Care and Health Plan Quality Initiatives—Stacy Howes

Long-Term Care Planning Guide

HB599 was passed in Spring 2021, and it required MHCC to create a Long-Term Care Planning Guide for Maryland residents. The guide has been completed in Microsoft Word in both English and Spanish. The text is currently being converted to a brochure format. The Quality Reporting website has been updated with a new section entitled Long Term Care Planning Toolkit. It includes multiple planning guides and checklists for long term care settings, advance directives information, and a financial calculator. A place is reserved on this page for the Planning Guide once it is converted to brochure form. The Toolkit page will be live before the end of the year, and the Planning Guide will be complete and posted as part of the Toolkit within the next 6-8 weeks.

Nursing Home Family Experience of Care Survey

The final invitation to participate was mailed before Thanksgiving. Staff continue to respond to phone calls and emails about the survey.

Nursing Home and Assisted Living Influenza Vaccination Survey

Facilities received mid-season reminder notices via GovDelivery with information regarding National Influenza Vaccination Week and a link to the CDC vaccine finder.

Hospice and Home Health Influenza Vaccination Survey

No new updates. Data collection is ongoing for hospice and home health agencies.

Health Plan Quality Initiative

The new Request for Proposals is still in preparation. Health plan data for 2020 has been received from the contractor, Health Data Company, and the data are being cleaned and formatted for posting on the Quality Reporting site.

Outpatient Quality Initiative—Mariama Gondo

Outpatient Quality Initiative

No new updates.

Health Disparities Initiative

In response to House Bill 309/Senate Bill 565, in which the bill required the Commission to work in collaboration with the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities (OMHHD); staff drafted, tested, and administered a questionnaire to collect basic descriptive information on MDH programs and activities that serve vulnerable populations. This questionnaire will be used to develop an inventory of programs and services for vulnerable populations as required under the legislation and will inform the final report that is due to the legislature in December 2021. Staff has spent the last month formatting and analyzing the survey data and preparing the draft report for senior leadership review. In terms of findings, staff received information on over 400 programs across the state. Most programs serve vulnerable populations directly, while about 5% of the programs serve all Marylanders. Staff continue to collaborate with the OMHHD on this project.