Summary

The Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio's Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB clinical-community linkages system coordinates and trains community health workers employed throughout the community. Launched in 2007 to address high rates of infant mortality in Lucas County, the Pathways system expanded in 2015 to connect low-income residents with or at risk for chronic diseases to needed medical care and social services. Contracts with Medicaid Managed Care Plans help sustain the system; one began contracting for chronic disease outcomes in 2016.

Challenge

Low-income and minority residents of Lucas County, Ohio, need more than just medical coverage to live to their fullest potential; they require a medical home, food, clothing, shelter and other basic necessities. Yet 14% of Lucas County adults were concerned about having enough food for themselves and their families in the past 30 days, increasing to 36% of those with annual incomes of less than $25,000, according to the 2013/2014 Lucas County Community Health Assessment. Plus, African Americans (29%) and Hispanics (27%) were more likely than whites (9%) to worry about having enough food in the past year, according to latest assessment. And African American residents in Toledo, Lucas County's seat, spend 49% of income on housing, while the housing cost burden is 36% for the population overall, according to the City of Toledo Department of Neighborhood's 2015-2020 Consolidated Plan.

"CHWs are critical to care coordination and great advocates for our patients. CHWs relate to patients and help them achieve better health outcomes."

- Linda Bert, Regional Manager of Mercy Medical Partners

Solution

The Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB relies on community health workers (CHWs) to find and enroll low-income residents with or at risk for chronic diseases who need connections to medical care and social services. These CHWs are embedded in medical homes and social service organizations throughout Lucas County, and they canvass low-income neighborhoods to find those most in need. CHWs work with clients to develop care coordination plans that prioritize and address needs, and outcomes are tracked in the electronic system and monitored by Pathways staff. Care coordination agencies are paid based on client outcomes, an innovative pay-for-value arrangement that addresses health disparities.

Success Stories

http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/
Results
The Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB is nationally certified as a Level 1 Pathways Community HUB, a model recognized by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) as a data-driven approach to identifying and addressing risk factors at the individual and community levels.

One Medicaid Managed Care Plan in Ohio began paying for chronic disease outcomes - such as connecting Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB clients to a medical home, nutritious food and stable housing - in September 2016. This is an important step toward sustainability for the Pathways chronic disease program, which started in June 2015 and so far has served more than 340 clients.

An outcome payment for food assistance is generated, for example, when a corresponding “pathway” is opened for a client; a referral is made to a food pantry or other program; and the community health worker verifies the client received assistance. This ensures that vulnerable residents are enrolled in the care coordination system and connected to evidence-based medical and social services.

Sustainable Success
Other Medicaid Managed Care Plans are considering contracting with the Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB for chronic disease outcome payments. Pathways also continues to build on its system of care coordination sites for adults with or at risk for chronic diseases, as well as generate more client referrals from professionals. With more community health workers and care coordination sites in the clinical-community linkages system, more vulnerable Lucas County residents will be able to get needed medical and social services.

Pathways received Partnerships to Improve Community Health funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio, which coordinates the clinical-community linkages system.

Your Involvement is Key
Refer Lucas County residents in need of care coordination to the Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio’s Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB, a clinical-community linkages system. Also encourage care providers and community agencies to employ community health workers to utilize Pathways and connect residents to needed medical care and social services. By addressing social determinants of health and advancing health equity, we can improve both the health of our residents and the overall community.

Success Stories
http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/

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