PCPCC Support & Alignment Network for Patient, Caregiver & Community Engagement

Person and Family Engagement:
Getting Started for Clinicians and Quality Improvement Staff

This Frequently Asked Question set answers some common questions that clinicians and quality staff may have about why getting patients and families involved in your clinic’s quality activities can make a difference, and how to get started. Please visit the PCPCC Support and Alignment Network website for links to resources such as publications and webinars, that can help you get started on implementation.

Why involving patients and families makes a difference

Bringing the perspectives of patients and families directly into the planning, delivery, and evaluation of health care is what patient- and family-centered care is all about. Patient and family centered care is intended to improve quality and safety in health care, and to encourage people to engage in health care in a way that improves health outcomes. Patients and families bring important perspectives to quality improvement. They can:

- Teach how systems really work from the patient point of view
- Keep staff grounded in reality.
- Provide timely feedback and ideas for improving processes and care
- Inspire and energize staff.
- Lessen the burden on staff to fix the problems...
- Staff do not have to have all the answers.
- Bring connections with the community.
- Offer an opportunity to “give back.”

Studies and experience increasingly show that when health care administrators, providers, and patients and families work in partnership, the quality and safety of health care rise, costs decrease, and provider and patient satisfaction increase. See the 2016 National Academy of Medicine report, Harnessing Evidence and Experience to Change Culture for more discussion of the relationship between patient-centered care, engagement and outcomes. Links to additional full text articles are included here:

- Implementation of the patient-centered medical home in the Veterans Health Administration: Associations with patient satisfaction, quality of care, staff burnout, and hospital and emergency department use (2014)

- Enhanced support for shared decision making reduced costs of care for patients with preference-sensitive conditions (2013)

- Promoting Patient and Family Partnerships in Ambulatory Care Improvement: A Narrative Review and Focus Group Findings (2016)
Medical Home Transformation in Pediatric Primary Care—What Drives Change? (2013)

Implementing Patient-Centered Medical Homes in the Nation’s Largest Integrated Delivery System (Case Study, 2011)

Implementing strategies in consumer and community engagement in health care: results of a large-scale, scoping meta-review (2014)

What is patient-centered care?

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Person and Family Engagement Strategy defines person-centered care with this description: “Patients and families are partners in defining, designing, participating in and assessing the care practices and systems that serve them to assure they are respectful of and responsive to individual patient preferences, needs and values. This collaborative engagement allows patient values to guide all clinical decisions and drives genuine transformation in attitudes, behavior and practice.”

Patient-centered care is also sometimes referred to as ‘person centered care’ or ‘person and family centered care’ (‘family’ includes any group of people who support the person in care). We use both terms in PCPCC material.

CMS states that person and family centered care ‘demands that providers and individuals share power and responsibility in goal setting, decision-making and care management. It also requires giving people access to understandable information and decision support tools to equip them and their families with the information to manage their health and wellness, navigate the full span of the health care delivery system and make their own informed choices about care.”

What is the connection between patient-centered care, patient engagement and improved outcomes?

Patient-centered care makes it more likely that people have a trusting relationship, good communication and a decision-making partnership with their provider team. Patient-centered care is the foundation that leads to patient (or person) engagement. More engaged people may be more likely to stick with treatment recommendations and to seek care if they need it. Patient-centered care finds ways for clinicians to partner with patients and share decision-making so that the patient (and family members) are on the same page as the clinician. This engagement can improve health status and also avoid preventive emergency visits and hospitalizations. Visit our SAN Resource Library for links to evidence.

Why work on person and family engagement now?

There is growing evidence that person and family engagement contributes to improved patient outcomes, and that it may improve clinician satisfaction as well. In addition, the health care system is in a period of transformation! Payment incentives and reporting requirements address patient and family engagement as an important foundation for improving health outcomes and reducing costs. For example:

- The new Medicare Quality Payment Program (which replaced the Physician Quality Reporting System in 2017), requires practices to report on quality improvement activities as well as other categories of performance. Patient and family engagement and improvements in quality and safety are priority issues
and are among the many Improvement Activities that can be selected by clinicians to meet reporting requirements.

- The Transforming Clinical Practice Initiative is a large scale program created to recruit 140,000 clinical practices into a peer learning network that drives comprehensive quality improvement and care transformation. The TCPI builds on a foundation of patient and family engagement as a key ‘driver’ of improved health outcomes and reduced costs. See the TCPI “Driver Diagram” for an outline of tactics and strategies that drive change. The TCPI also helps clinicians prepare for the Medicare Quality Payment Program launched in 2017.

- Clinicians participating in one of CMS’s many transformation initiatives also have incentives and support for making changes. The Comprehensive Primary Care Plus (CPC+) initiative aims to strengthen primary care through regionally-based multi-payer payment reform and care delivery transformation. CPC+ is based on a model of comprehensive primary care based on: (1) Access and Continuity; (2) Care Management; (3) Comprehensiveness and Coordination; (4) Patient and Caregiver Engagement; and (5) Planned Care and Population Health.

**How would I measure patient and family centered care?**

There is no one way to measure patient and family centered care. But, there are many ways to evaluate patient and family centered care in a way that could help your practice improve. The goal of patient and family centered care is to engage people, improve health outcomes, and help manage costs (by preventing complications, avoiding unneeded hospitalizations, and reducing other unneeded care.) Clinicians participating in the Transforming Clinical Practice Initiative (TCPI) will start measuring certain processes related to patient and family engagement in 2017 using six standardized measures. Practices working towards transformation will measure baseline and ongoing performance on implementation of the processes. The real results in person and family engagement will be healthier people, better experiences of care, and less costly health care. Support is available from Practice Transformation Networks and Support and Alignment Networks for assessment and improvement activities. Visit our TCPI Measures Page for detailed information.

**What are some ways to get started with person and family centered care?**

There are many ways to involve patients and families in partnerships that improve quality, safety, and engagement in care. We suggest inviting patients and family members to collaborate on quality improvements that promote engagement. We encourage you to look at the Institute for Patient and Family Centered Care’s ‘Advancing the Practice of Patient-and Family-Centered Care in Primary Care... How to Get Started,” Guide, for step by step ideas of how to get started. The Guide also includes tools such as a self-assessment protocols and checklists that can help you move forward.

Make communication a two way street – ask patient and family advisors for suggestions on how to improve your practice, and also invite input on how to reach the goals your practice has defined improving engagement. Some ways clinical practices involve patients include:

- Setting up a Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC)
- Inviting a patient or family member to join the practice’s Quality Improvement or Safety Committee, or just to join into a practice-initiative to improve care for a specific disease or concern
- Hold a one time or periodic ‘focus group’ that invites patients and families to talk about what they like or would improve about the practice
- Host a ‘walk through’ of the clinic and invite patients and family members to provide feedback about their experiences as they move through the clinic
Consider developing a peer support program to involve patients and families in improving care for others like them.

**Transforming your practice to promote patient and family engagement**

It isn’t always easy to change your practice in a way that embraces input and participation of patients and families. It will take leadership, perseverance, and a methodical approach. We encourage you to look at the Institute for Patient and Family Centered Care’s ‘**Advancing the Practice of Patient-and Family-Centered Care in Primary Care... How to Get Started**’ Guide, for step by step ideas of how to get started. The 2014 publication ‘**A Roadmap for Patient and Family Engagement in Healthcare**’ also includes valuable strategies for getting started. Practices interested in involving patients as peer supporters will find helpful information from **Peers for Progress**.

Practices participating in the Transforming Clinical Practice Initiative (TCPI), will be able to work with a Practice Transformation Network Coach to complete the ‘Practice Assessment Tool,’ (PAT) that examines opportunities for patient and family engagement. The PAT will guide you to strategies for improving engagement. Visit our SAN Technical Assistance Page to find out how the PCPCC SAN can help you!

[Contact PCPCC SAN](#)