



# Beacon Community Program

Awardee of The Office of the National Coordinator for  
Health Information Technology

*The Beacon Community Program goals include building and strengthening a health information technology infrastructure; improving health outcomes, care quality, and cost efficiencies; and spearheading innovations to achieve better health and health care.*

## **Bangor Beacon Community**

### **Overview of the Bangor Beacon Community**

The state of Maine has a long history of collaboration among local employers, purchasers, and providers to achieve health care quality improvements. The partners of the Bangor Beacon Community (BBC) will further develop and expand this collaboration and leverage strong provider-patient relationships to improve the health of Maine residents—and the health of the health care system that serves them—through better care management and information technology-facilitated provider communication.

Under the BBC, HealthInfoNet, the state's existing health information exchange, will be expanded and augmented with new delivery system improvements that will help more providers, hospitals, and the community make the most use out of the technology, leading to more efficient, high-quality care and better health, particularly for patients with diabetes, lung disease, heart disease, and asthma. HealthInfoNet has been providing access to critical data pertaining to prescriptions, problems, allergies, and immunizations for continuity of care since early 2009.

### **Goal of the Program**

The BBC is working to achieve four objectives to improve the health of people with chronic conditions by:

- Providing information technology-enhanced coordinated care management
- Improving access to, and use of, adult immunization data as recommended
- Preventing unnecessary emergency department (ED) visits and re-admissions to hospitals by better coordinating care and strengthening primary care through health information technology (health IT)
- Facilitating patients' access to their own records

### **Using Health Information Technology to Make a Difference**

The specific strategies that the BBC will use include:

- Developing a care management model to improve the health of patients with chronic conditions. Nurse care managers are working directly with providers to plan patients' care and help patients manage their own care. The care managers also will use electronic health records to maintain patients' medical information and monitor patients at home via electronic home monitoring devices that can send information about how a patient is doing in real time over networks or via phone lines. Activating patients to better manage and control their

chronic conditions will result in fewer ED visits and greater likelihood of sustained health improvements.

- Increasing the number of hospitals, doctors, home care providers, and mental health providers who exchange information reliably and securely. The consortium is also testing new systems to facilitate direct communications among doctors through secure e-mail messages.
- Working to develop a method to track adult immunizations for pneumonia and influenza and identify new ways of alerting providers to patients in need of particular services.

### **A Team Approach**

The BBC is a consortium of multiple community partners including Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems and the following: The Acadia Hospital, Community Health and Counseling, Eastern Maine Community College, Eastern Maine HomeCare, Eastern Maine Medical Center, Maine Primary Care Association, Penobscot Community Healthcare, Ross Manor, St. Joseph's Healthcare, and Stillwater Healthcare. The partners have a proven record of sustained collaboration to affect community health improvements. Their commitment to expand the reach of their efforts under the BBC will be an example to others that improving the health status of residents starts with local community partners working together toward a common aim.

### **Improvements for Patients and the Community**

The BBC aims to directly impact the health of area residents by using health IT to increase efficiencies and coordination of care for persons with chronic conditions. These improvements will allow patients to:

- Have access to their medical information at any time and from any location by accessing a secure online portal. This empowers patients to be a part of their own medical team, ask informed questions, and to be involved in their own care.
- Remain at home while receiving timely health management support from their providers and care managers. Patients will experience better care coordination and better communication between the providers caring for them.

With the investments made to build and strengthen the quality improvement, technology, and data infrastructure, the Bangor Beacon Community has deployed care managers across the catchment area to engage and support patients with multiple chronic conditions. Preliminary results show these interventions are already making improvements in the quality of life of Bangor residents.

