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.

Greater Cincinnati Beacon Community

Overview of the Greater Cincinnati Beacon Community

In Greater Cincinnati, local stakeholders representing payers, employers, providers, and consumers have joined forces to work toward a broader vision of regional health transformation and ultimately to improve the health of its people. The Greater Cincinnati Beacon Community (GCBC) is a partnership of leading technology and quality organizations serving the Greater Cincinnati tri-state region which includes parts of Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. The GCBC will integrate and implement advanced health information technology (health IT)/health information exchange (HIE) capabilities and proven clinical transformation methods across the continuum of care.

HealthBridge—one of the nation's largest, self-sustaining health information organizations—is working together with Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC), the Health Improvement Collaborative of Greater Cincinnati, and the Greater Cincinnati Health Council to deploy two IT-driven initiatives focused on improving quality, efficiency, and population health objectives in the delivery of pediatric asthma and adult diabetes care.

Goal of the Program

The GCBC partners are committed to the long-term goals of improving quality, value, and population health and achieving meaningful use of health IT/HIE in Greater Cincinnati, including:

- Achieving meaningful and improved health care quality, safety, cost-efficiency, and reduced health disparities for patients with pediatric asthma and adult diabetes
- Integrating and implementing advanced health IT/HIE capabilities and proven clinical transformation methods across the continuum of care
- Leveraging access to electronic data and advanced electronic health records adoption to coordinate care teams across the community to support effective management of diabetes and pediatric asthma

In particular, the GCBC is investing resources to build and strengthen the health IT infrastructure to support improvements in pediatric asthma and diabetes care, reductions in preventable emergency department (ED) visits and hospital readmissions, reductions in diabetes care costs, improvements in smoking cessation and immunization rates, and significant numbers of providers achieving meaningful use.

Using Health Information Technology to Make a Difference

The GCBC partners are implementing health IT/HIE improvements to enable:

- Timely tracking and reporting of ED visits and hospitalizations

- E-Notices for ED and Hospital Visit/Discharge—Alert ambulatory providers regarding patients' emergency room or inpatient hospital visits or discharge
- Implementation of technology tools including disease registries and clinical data repository that help providers identify and track populations with asthma or diabetes and support advanced analytics for longitudinal monitoring of these populations
- Building of a Master Patient Index to enable enhanced patient-practice-data association and to coordinate and support care transitions across the care continuum (inpatient, outpatient, emergency, primary care, specialty care, etc.)
- Collection of race, ethnicity, and language data and the use of this data to target disparities in care
- Adult Diabetes—Work with health systems and affiliated independent physician practices in a regional Patient Centered Medical Home improvement initiative focused on care transformation that leads to greater practice efficiency, better patient outcomes and satisfaction, and cost reduction
- Pediatric Asthma—Leverage work of two asthma improvement subgroups within CCHMC—39 practices in the Physician Hospital Organization group and two primary care clinics that serve predominantly Medicaid patients—to provide clinicians with shared access to the most current, comprehensive set of available patient information
- Hospital Improvement—Work with hospital leadership and clinical staff to focus on reductions in ED visits; hospital readmissions across the community for those with diabetes; as well as reductions in documented disparities in care associated with race, ethnicity, and/or language

A Team Approach
The GCBC is a partnership of leading technology and quality experts from the following organizations: HealthBridge (prime grantee), Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, the Greater Cincinnati Health Council, GE, the Health Improvement Collaborative of Greater Cincinnati, and the University of Cincinnati.

Improvements for Patients and the Community
The Greater Cincinnati Beacon Community is improving the health care quality, cost-effectiveness, and population health of the community by:
- Helping physician practices to provide optimal care for patients with asthma and diabetes
- Reducing preventable visits to emergency rooms and re-hospitalizations
- Improving information flow and care coordination as patients move from one care setting to another
- Demonstrating through cutting-edge research the interventions that have the most impact on improving patient care and health outcomes

The GCBC partners plan to spread the health IT and improvement infrastructure across providers in the community. By the end of the Beacon program, the health IT infrastructure will be available community-wide. Through its Connecting Communities Health Information Exchange partnerships in Dayton and Springfield, Ohio; Morehead, KY; and Bloomington, IN, HealthBridge also plans to extend both the health IT and improvement infrastructure to other communities participating in its network. The community partnership formed under the GCBC has stimulated community conversations about future payment reform tied to performance improvement. It is a model for other regional efforts to build community partnerships to support regional health transformation and improve the lives of its residents.