Serving Our Members

History and Overview

Founded in 1934, VAHHS is a 501(c)(6) organization. VAHHS is member-owned and devoted to improving the health status of communities throughout Vermont. Our activities include advocacy, policy development, education and research. We work in partnership with dozens of Vermont health care organizations on a wide variety of issues. We provide educational and research services for members and non-members alike.

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In partnership with our members and community, VAHHS coordinates and integrates care, and the infrastructure of the health care delivery system with the goal of improving the health status of Vermonters.

How Vermont Hospitals are Leading the Nation

To advocate for, lead, and serve our members in their efforts to develop, sustain, and improve health services for Vermonters.

Vision:
A financially sustainable, high quality, health care system accessible and affordable for all Vermonters.

Mission:
To advocate for, lead, and serve our members in their efforts to develop, sustain, and improve health services for Vermonters.

Focusing on the President's letter from the Board Chair

This is one of the most rewarding yet challenging times to be a hospital leader. Vermont’s hospitals are the backbones of our communities, from the smallest critical access hospital to Fletcher Allen Health Care, the state’s academic medical center. We provide services to all kinds of communities, ranging from the most sophisticated “high tech” care to the kind of care that is most appreciated—the “high touch” care experienced by our patients in a variety of settings.

Vermont’s hospitals have experienced the ongoing economic recession in several ways. Some of us have frozen wages for our workers, while some have actually had to reduce their workforce. All of us have had to focus on reducing our costs while maintaining the services our communities need and expect in Vermont. At the same time, we’ve seen more patients struggle to pay their share of insurance premiums and deductibles, or who have lost their coverage altogether.

Despite these challenges, Vermont continues to rank as among the healthiest states in the nation while being among the lowest utilizers of services—testimony to the hard work of our nurses, physicians, hospitals, and all those who support our health care delivery system. Our challenge today is to continue to improve on this infrastructure without jeopardizing the care our patients need.

Vermont hospital leaders continue to play a leadership role in the health care reforms this state has pioneered to help its citizens access affordable health care, including:

1. The Blueprint for Health, which is being recognized nationally as a model for transforming primary care through payment reform, grew out of a collective effort in Vermont to identify and better care for those with chronic illnesses.

2. Hospitals have supported access initiatives like Catamount Health, designed to make affordable health coverage available to Vermonters without insurance.

3. VAHHS has begun working with many of these providers to begin exploring opportunities for this kind of collaboration and integration, and we look forward to making progress on these efforts over the course of the next year.

Steps to implement: 1. Work collaboratively and aggressively to secure the necessary funding and support to achieve this vision. 2. Assuming Medicare participation, VAHHS supports an accelerated Blueprint strategy with an aim to have all Vermonters. Achieving this vision will take continued leadership, collaboration, resources and time.

3. Continue to monitor progress. We will never know if progress has been achieved if we cannot measure it. Key indicators broadly available to Vermonters. 4. Systems are poised to participate as resources become available.

5. The Vermont Information Technology Leaders (VITL), developed out of a VAHHS-led initiative, continues to lead the nation in implementing electronic health records (EHRs) in primary care practices. At the same time, EHRs are being actively implemented in a number of hospitals around the state, some of them through collaborative relationships with other hospitals.

6. Hospitals have supported access initiatives like Catamount Health, designed to make affordable health coverage available to Vermonters without insurance.

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What VAHHS Supports:
Delivery system reform efforts that improve care to patients such as the Blueprint for Health and the work of VITL.

Payment reforms that align provider incentives, promote the efficient delivery of care and are synchronized with changes at the federal level.

Affordable access to health care coverage for all Vermonters.

In 2009, Vermont was ranked number one in the nation on measures of health care system performance by the Commonwealth Fund. Vermont was also ranked the “Healthiest State in the Nation” by the United Health Foundation. Much of this success can be attributed to recent reform efforts supported by Vermont’s hospitals. While there is a lot to be proud of, much work remains to ensure that our hospitals can continue to meet community needs as well as invest in health information technology, quality, safety and other reform efforts.

Member Hospitals - Our hospitals, their geographic placement, the range of services they offer and the 24/7 access they provide are designed to meet the needs of Vermonters. Vermont’s non-profit hospitals range from Fletcher Allen Health Care, a 652 bed, level one trauma center and teaching hospital to the eight small critical access hospitals that provide safety net services, such as emergency care, that everyone wants close to home. Specialized services, like cardiac surgery or inpatient psychiatric care are offered regionally.

Blueprint for Health Integrated Medical Home Pilots - These pilot communities are simultaneously installing electronic health records, creating a multi-dimensional evaluation framework and implementing quality and operational improvements. At the core of the Blueprint model is financial reform – changing how providers, in this case primary care practices, are paid. Blueprint Integrated Pilots are operating in three hospital communities: Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital in Saint Johnsbury, Fletcher Allen Health Care in Burlington and Central Vermont Medical Center in Berlin.

Blueprint “Ready” Communities - Last year, the VAHHS Board made a commitment to accelerate the expansion of the Blueprint to all hospital service areas. Many hospitals are taking advantage of $1.3 million in state funding to support medical home and Community Health Team preparations.

Vermont Information Technology Leaders (VITL) and DocSite VITL plays a key role in coordinating statewide health information technology efforts. VITL’s medication history service is running in three hospital ERs and provides immediate access to a list of prescriptions a patient has recently filled. VITL not only supports physician practices in installing and implementing an EHR, but has also developed standardized connections that bring lab results into the EHR regardless of what system they are using.

VITL is also providing a critical data service to the Vermont Blueprint for Health through DocSite. DocSite is a patient registry that helps physicians and other caregivers provide care aligned with nationally recognized, evidenced-based medical guidelines.

Member Hospitals
1. Northwestern Medical Center
2. North Country Health System
3. Fletcher Allen Health Care
4. Copley Hospital
5. Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital
6. Central Vermont Medical Center
7. Porter Medical Center
8. Gifford Medical Center
9. Veterans Affairs Medical Center
10. Rutland Regional Medical Center
11. Mt. Ascutney Hospital and Health Center
12. Grace Cottage Hospital
13. Southwestern Vermont Medical Center
14. Brattleboro Retreat
15. Brattleboro Memorial Hospital

Legend
- Member Hospitals
- Blueprint for Health Integrated Medical Home Pilots
- Blueprint “Ready” Communities
- Electronic Health Records
- PRISM Regional
- Medical Home Collaborative

EHRs and PRISM Regional - The installation of an EHR takes months of planning and is one of the most capital-intensive projects taking place in hospitals and physician practices today. Most hospitals are at some stage in the planning process. Fourteen of Vermont’s hospitals have implemented EHRs in their hospital and/or community. Others, such as Porter Hospital have submitted their CON applications and are awaiting BISHCA approval.

Fletcher Allen in Burlington is extending access to their PRISM product to hospitals in Vermont and New York through an effort known as PRISM Regional. To date, four hospitals and several independent practices have submitted letters of intent to participate in PRISM.

Medical Home Collaborative - The Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care, Bi-state Primary Care and the Vermont Blueprint for Health have created a collaborative to work with providers across the state who wish to advance their “medical home” readiness and maximize their ability to achieve National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) standards. The Collaborative provides a structure to help provider teams identify what they need to work on and gives them the tools to improve. The curriculum uses Clinical Microsystems Trainings as a foundation, along with the Care Model (originally the Chronic Care Model) and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement’s (IHI) Model for Improvement. At the end of the nine-month effort, participating practices will have a comprehensive understanding of what it means to be a “medical home,” what their own strengths and weaknesses are and have quality improvement knowledge and skills to help them become functional patient centered medical homes for their patients.

Accountable Care Organization Pilots (ACO) - An ACO is a combination of delivery system and financial reform efforts that create shared accountability for the costs and quality of care of a defined population. An ACO is composed of key providers of primary and secondary care within a community, including specialist physicians, the local acute care hospital and others.

Affordable access to health care coverage for all Vermonters.