



Indian Health Service Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: (301) 443-3593, newsroom@ihs.gov

CMS selects Quality Improvement Organization to support quality improvement at Indian Health Service hospitals

Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) awarded a new contract to help support best health care practices and other operational improvements for Indian Health Service (IHS) federal government operated hospitals that participate in the Medicare program. HealthInsight, a current Quality Innovation Network – Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO), will partner with IHS hospitals to continuously improve the quality of care for the Medicare patients they serve. These efforts will also benefit other patients receiving care at the same facilities. This award is part of a larger IHS quality initiative supported by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Executive Council on Quality Care led by HHS Acting Deputy Secretary Mary K. Wakefield. With this collaborative strategy, IHS and CMS are working together to achieve and sustain improvements in quality of care.

“Our top priority is the health and safety of patients that seek care at facilities we oversee. I am incredibly excited by this opportunity to bring resources and support to American Indian and Alaskan Native patients to improve the delivery of high quality care to patients,” said Patrick Conway, M.D., CMS acting principal deputy administrator and chief medical officer. “Our QIN-QIO is well poised to assist with this transformation and will work with the Indian Health Service hospitals and clinicians to ensure beneficiaries get the best possible care.”

“Today’s announcement underscores the IHS commitment to ensuring that every IHS hospital, clinic and health center provides high-quality health care to our patients,” said IHS Principal Deputy Director Mary L. Smith. “IHS hospitals – and our staff members across the country – are focused on continuous improvement. The QIO will provide training for our staff and access to experts to strengthen IHS capacity to deliver quality health care for American Indian and Alaska Native patients.”

The overarching goals for the QIN-QIO are to support, build, and redesign if needed IHS hospital operating infrastructure in order to provide high-quality health care services to Medicare beneficiaries. The contract will focus on leadership, staff development, data acquisition and analytics, clinical standards of care, and quality of care related to the Medicare program. CMS expects that this work, while focused on Medicare beneficiaries, will result in systemic change that improves all of the care provided at these facilities. Over the course of the contract (approximately three years), the QIN-QIO will:

- Develop effective leaders through training and networking;
- Build strong hospital systems through team based care and clinical quality improvement;
- Strengthen patient, family, and tribal engagement at the project and local levels;
- Promote and spread best practices in hospitals through Web-based Learning & Action Networks and direct technical assistance;

- Ensure that clinical, operational, and safety standards are met or exceeded;
- Assist with the development of hospital improvement plans; and
- Establish baseline data to ensure plans for improvement are successful and sustainable.

This action expands upon the May 2016 announcement of a [CMS and IHS partnership to reduce hospital acquired conditions and avoidable readmissions](#).

HealthInsight is the current QIN-QIO for the southwest region of the U.S., where many IHS federal government operated hospitals are located. HealthInsight has a history of strategic partnerships that support quality improvement and innovation in hospitals across multiple states.

IHS quality efforts are driven by its draft [Quality Framework, developed in consultation with tribal leaders](#) from July through October 2016. The IHS Quality Framework aims to develop, implement, and sustain an effective quality program that: improves patient experience and outcomes; strengthens organizational capacity; and ensures the delivery of reliable, high quality health care for IHS federal government operated facilities.

The IHS, an agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.2 million American Indians and Alaska Natives.

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