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IHS and CMS partnership to strengthen hospital care quality

Focus on hospital quality through Hospital Engagement Networks benefits patients by preventing adverse events

The Indian Health Service, in conjunction with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), announced today a new partnership to strengthen the quality of care delivered in IHS-operated hospitals. IHS hospitals will receive assistance from a CMS-supported Hospital Engagement Network (HEN). The purpose of a HEN is to help health care facilities deliver better care and to spend dollars efficiently. Through this partnership, IHS will actively participate in HEN activities to strengthen patient safety and share best practices, including implementing quality improvement plans. IHS hospitals will be able to access training and technical assistance that supports hospitals in making patient care safer. This effort includes IHS hospitals in the [Great Plains Area](#), including Rosebud and Pine Ridge IHS hospitals in South Dakota and Omaha Winnebago IHS hospital in Nebraska.

“IHS is committed to leveraging every opportunity to ensure quality health care for patients, and IHS hospitals will now access valuable technical assistance through a Hospital Engagement Network,” said Mary Smith, IHS principal deputy director. “This benefits IHS patients, who are our first priority. Quality improvement is a continuous effort at IHS hospitals—as it is at all healthcare facilities. Working with a Hospital Engagement Network brings more resources and underscores our commitment to focus on delivering efficient and high quality care for our patients.”

“We have made progress in keeping patients safe and are focused on accelerating improvement efforts through collaboration and reliable implementation of best practices,” said Patrick Conway, M.D., CMS Acting Principal Deputy Administrator and Chief Medical Officer. “We, like many of our sister agencies, are dedicated to working with the IHS to help improve the safety and quality of care for the patients served by the hospitals in this network.” Click here to learn more about [how Agency collaboration is leading to better patient outcomes](#).

HENs are one part of a framework established by the Affordable Care Act to deliver better care and to spend dollars efficiently. Read the CMS fact sheet on HENs: [Continuing Forward Momentum on Reducing Patient Harm](#).

The HENs focus on reducing preventable patient harm such as hospital acquired infections and avoidable readmissions, in accordance with best practices for hospitals. The program helps to identify proven solutions that work to reduce hospital-acquired conditions and to share them with other hospitals. HENs track and monitor hospital progress in meeting quality improvement goals. As part of the efforts, IHS hospitals will welcome teams of quality improvement experts for site visits. CMS oversees both the

Hospital Engagement Networks and the Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organizations (QIN-QIOs), in which IHS already participates.

This new effort builds on previous IHS work on quality improvement:

- Some parts of IHS previously participated in activities of a first round Hospital Engagement Network early 2013 and ending December 2014. The second round of HENs continues the work of the previous round.
- IHS continues to participate in the Great Plains Quality Innovation Network, a CMS QIN-QIO serving Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota. The Great Plains Quality Innovation Network promotes effective prevention and treatment of chronic disease, makes care safer, and promotes effective communication and coordination of care.

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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