

Enhanced Care Coordination with Shared Staff at Community Medical Centers

Summary

At Community Medical Centers, a Federally Qualified Health Center, Registered Dietitians (RD) and credentialed Lactation Consultants (IBCLC) provide WIC services, and they also work in the health clinics. This shared staffing approach started 20 years ago with RDs working part-time in WIC and part-time in the clinics to provide services for patients in the Comprehensive Perinatal Services Program (CPSP) and Sweet Success Diabetes Program. It has evolved with RDs also providing medical nutrition therapy for clinic patients and, more recently, with lactation experts shared between WIC and the clinics. Sharing staff integrates WIC with clinic services and facilitates more in-depth care coordination for patients.

Process

The shared staff report to the WIC Director with clinical support from the CPSP & Sweet Success program managers. Staff code their timesheets for hours worked in WIC and in the clinics. WIC hours are billed to the WIC contract, and clinic hours are covered by the clinic budgets with reimbursement for clinic services from CPSP, Medicare, or Health Plans. The shared staff have full provider access to the electronic health record, NextGen, to access patient information and enter care notes. Clinic staff can place WIC referrals in NextGen, and all WIC staff have NextGen access to retrieve the referrals and to view patient information (e.g., measurements) for WIC enrollment and recertification.

Outcomes

A shared staff approach has benefits for patients, employees, and clinic/program operations. Patients experience coordinated care with fewer appointments requiring less time and travel for services and reduced no show rates. Clinic staff have a better understanding of WIC and WIC staff have a better understanding of clinic processes which fosters collaboration and shared goals for patient care. Patients scheduled for combined services are more likely to come to their appointments which generates more clinic revenue.

“The no show rate reduced from 36% to 0%, for postpartum gestational diabetes visits, when these visits with the Registered Dietitian were also scheduled with the WIC infant enrollment visit.”

WIC staff access to NextGen supports timely follow-up on referrals and streamlined certification appointments.

“There is more blood work compliance for WIC enrollment and recertification, since staff can look it up in the EHR and have it tested on site, if needed.”

Recruitment for RDs is easier and their job satisfaction is higher because they have more opportunity to use and build their clinical skills.

Success Strategies

Community Medical Centers leaders suggest identifying staff champions who are open to trying new processes and workflows and who want to find ways to improve the patient/participant experience. Provide robust onboarding and training for shared staff and support them in balancing their job roles. Frequent communication between program managers and with the shared staff is key for success.

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