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Pilot projects will link school nurses to health info for students with complex health care needs, & improve breast cancer screening for women

Federal grant will fund access to electronic medical records, tap patient databases

Connecting School Nurses to Pediatricians

A group of Anchorage School District parents of children with complex health care needs are testing out a new system that allows their child's school nurse to access their child's medical records online. This shared plan of care will facilitate communication among health care providers, school nurses and families as they work together to meet the needs of children.

That is one of two federally funded pilot projects that DHSS is managing with Pinnacle Integrated Medicine, a Clinically Integrated Network with several practices in Alaska, to support coordination of services for women, children and families.

The care coordination project remotely links nurses at 5 elementary schools with electronic health records held at Alaska Center for Pediatrics, one of Pinnacle's practices. All the students in the pilot project are established patients of Alaska Center for Pediatrics and have an identified need for enhanced coordinated care between their healthcare providers and schools.

This project allows school nurses real-time access to the most up-to-date information on a child's health status, medications, illnesses, behaviors, and emerging needs, so that healthcare providers, parents and schools will be able to create a shared plan of care, with the goal of better health and educational outcomes for these children. This pilot is federally funded by the Maternal Child Health Bureau.

"This project is one of a number of national efforts attempting to demonstrate better quality, cost, and outcomes in health care through better coordination of care," said Dr. Thad Woodard, of Alaska Center for Pediatrics. "This seems intuitively correct but we need evidence that it is true. So the Alaska Center

for Pediatrics is willing to help as we hope that if efforts like this are proven to be effective then changing our health care system to reward similar behavior will unleash a multitude of other ideas that improve quality, access, outcomes and cost.”

Increasing Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Rates

Meanwhile, the Breast and Cervical Health Check (BCHC) program will partner with Pinnacle on a second pilot project to improve women’s breast and cervical cancer screening rates. The BCHC program is federally funded by the National Breast and Cervical Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP).

Primary care and OB/GYN practices will use Pinnacle’s technology to identify patients in Pinnacle’s practices whose age and health status suggest they should be screened for breast or cervical cancer. Each woman identified will be mailed a reminder to get screened. Patients who don’t make an appointment for screening will then be sent further health information as encouragement. The goal for this project is to increase identification of under-screened women in practices and offer a higher level of coordination for women who may not otherwise seek services.

“The Breast and Cervical Health Check program is excited to partner with Pinnacle to engage multiple providers in this innovative quality improvement and outreach model,” said Cheley Grigsby, BCHC Program Manager for DHSS. “This gives us the opportunity to identify rarely or never screened women who may be at risk for developing breast or cervical cancer, with the ultimate goal of reducing cancer mortality in Alaska.”

Both pilot projects are on one-year contracts and will continue through August 2017, with an option to renew for an additional year if they are proving successful.

