

Wilderness Health

Rural Health Network

Wilderness Health is a collaborative of nine independent hospitals working together to improve health care for a population of approximately 450,000 people in Northeast Minnesota and Northwest Wisconsin.

Wilderness Health was established in 2014 and like most rural areas, its communities face unique healthcare challenges. Many Wilderness Health members are located in some of the region's most remote areas and cover large geographical areas, with large distances between providers.

Wilderness Health members are working together to promote the Triple Aim: improvement of care, improvement of health and lowering costs. Strategic goals of the network are to:

- Coordinate and improve patient care using evidence-based medicine.
- Provide quality, local healthcare in our communities.
- Identify shared service opportunities to maximize operating efficiencies and reduce costs.
- Explore alternative payment opportunities, such as accountable care organizations (ACOs), with payers as the system transitions from fee for service to fee for value.
- Work with key community stakeholders to improve the continuum of care.
- Integrate data between entities to enable better care coordination and care planning.

Beginning in 2015, Wilderness Health established member roundtables that meet, discuss, share policies and procedures, and problem solve. The first roundtable was the Human Resources (HR) Roundtable, which was created to address the lack of capacity in hospital HR departments. This group initially focused on various HR policies and procedures and has succeeded in establishing a group that shares ideas and questions with other subject matter experts.

A second roundtable is the Chief Financial Officer Roundtable. Its initial focus has been on the transition to ICD-10 and cost reporting. In addition, a new Materials Management Roundtable has been formed that will focus on purchasing practices and decreasing waste.

Wilderness Health did not apply for participation as a Medicare shared savings ACO. However, the network applied for and is participating in the Integrated Health Partnership (IHP), Minnesota's Medicaid ACO model. As part of the IHP, Wilderness Health members have access to timely patient data for every attributed Medicaid member. A data integration initiative to improve care coordination throughout the healthcare system is a priority.

Planning for patient care is an active continuous process among an integrated system of settings, services and providers that make up a continuum of care. Input is obtained through a number of sources, including: discussions from various medical staff and provider committees, community needs assessments, patient surveys, current literature, research findings, practice guidelines/standards of care, data from various sources and quality measure benchmarking.

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- Provide quality, local healthcare.
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- Explore alternative payment models, such as ACOs
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Early achievements include:

- Creating member roundtables for Human Resource Directors and Chief Financial Officers
- Participating in MN Medicaid ACO model

