Class of 2026 | **AHA Next Generation Leaders Fellow**



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Situation Analysis

Hospital discharge planning challenges include delayed identification of barriers and reactive care management, leading to increased length of stay and inefficient resource utilization. CommonSpirit Health developed a Patient Discharge Complexity Score to provide an objective, dynamic method for identifying patients requiring intensive discharge planning, beginning at admission and continuing throughout the hospitalization.

Project Goals

The John A. Hartford Foundation

- Develop, refine and validate a Patient Discharge Complexity Score.
- Improve timeliness of care management assessments.
- Reduce length of stay for patients with complex medical and social needs.
- Establish system analytics and leadership reporting.

Actions Taken

- Developed a Discharge Complexity Scoring System using weighted variables across seven clinical and social domains.
- Established three standardized risk levels: 1) low — routine discharge planning; 2) moderate — enhanced planning and monitoring; and 3) high — intensive coordination and early intervention. Scores dynamically update throughout a patient's hospitalization.
- Built training modules, standardized documentation expectations and created a care management dashboard and monthly discharge complexity report.
- Evaluated pilot outcomes and developed a systemwide scale plan.

Positive Outcomes

- Improved prioritization of care management resources.
- Standardized discharge planning across care teams.
- Increased visibility of discharge barriers early in a patient's hospital stay.
- Improved multidisciplinary team communication and education.
- Decreased average length of stay by minimum of 0.25 days.
- Reduced avoidable bed days by 5,900 annually.
- Tracked cost savings of more than $14 million at pilot sites.

For detailed information, visit:
www.aha.org/center/next-generation-leaders-fellowship

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