Value Based Care Coalition

ACO Resilience: Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic

ACCOUNTABLE CARE ORGANIZATION

Pioneer Valley Accountable Care
http://www.pioneervalleyaco.org/about-us.html

Location

Springfield, MA

Number of Clinicians

1,400 physicians and about 175 medical practices

Aligned Beneficiaries

44,201 Medicare beneficiaries

Years in Next Gen

2016 - 2020

Payment Model

Fee-for-Service and SNFist Shared Savings Distribution Program

Pioneer Valley Accountable Care COVID-19 Efforts

Pioneer Valley Accountable Care (PVAC) is located in Springfield, Massachusetts. Baycare Health Partners (Baycare), its parent organization, is a Physician Hospital Organization that serves the four Baystate Health hospitals and consists of about 175 medical practices with approximately 1,400 physicians in the Pioneer Valley of western Massachusetts. Baycare is an alliance of the community and health system medical staff and Baystate Health hospitals and collaborates on improving the quality, safety, efficiency, and sustainability of health care in our community.

During the COVID-19 surge in Massachusetts, hospital capacity was strained. Providers had difficulty placing both COVID-negative and COVID-positive patients into safe settings, as many Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) settings lacked personal protective equipment, adequate staffing, and testing capacity at the outset of the pandemic.

PVAC faced three choices: putting COVID-positive patients into existing SNFs and working with the facilities to keep them safe; partnering with facilities to open floors within a SNF that were dedicated to COVID patients; or standing up new facilities and allowing only COVID-positive patients into these new facilities. PVAC ultimately implemented all three.

Leveraging the relationships PVAC has built with SNFs and SNFist physician groups, it was able to bring together key partners to deploy innovative solutions during the pandemic to keep patients safe and in the appropriate setting.

For example, PVAC collaborated with its partners to rapidly execute on the plan to take an unused building and, within two weeks, open a SNF dedicated to the care of COVID-positive short-stay patients.

This collaboration led to a community resource for regional hospitals to safely and efficiently send their COVID-positive patients requiring skilled nursing care to a facility dedicated and designed specifically for this purpose when both hospitals and the community needed it most.

When the pandemic started, PVAC worked tirelessly to bridge the divide between the individual SNFs themselves and the hospital to provide solutions ranging from increasing COVID-19 testing availability to providing clinician and clinical team education around issues that emerged during the pandemic. PVAC also facilitated the donation of iPads, from the Baystate Health Foundation to enable SNF patients, who were unable to have any visitors during the pandemic due to safety concerns, to communicate with their families and loved ones during this stressful and isolating time.

ACO-SNF Relationships Provide the Foundation for Success

The Next Generation and Medicare Shared Savings Program ACO models put a focus on post-acute care. With that mindset, PVAC has spent the last 5-6 years building a robust SNF network and establishing the clinical integration to create a team-based approach with a shared vision.

In this model, PVAC collaborates with private physician practices and SNFs to enhance patient care. As an ACO model participant, PVAC has invested time in building our network of providers while creating a culture of accountability. PVAC truly works in an integrated way with our ACO partners and has the mindset that we are all in this together.