

The Commonwealth Care Alliance (CCA), a not-for-profit special needs plan providing primary care to almost 5,000 high risk dual-eligible patients throughout Massachusetts, seeks to reduce hospitalization rates by 20% in patients admitted for subacute care throughout Massachusetts. This would be accomplished by scaling up a proven approach in skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) of (1) automatic palliative care consults for high risk patients, (2) standardized admission assessments by physicians with goals of care discussions, and (3) team improvement for patient and safety (TIPS) conferences to understand and address shortcomings in care of those patients transferred to the hospital.

The CCA palliative care team will consult on high risk patients in the hospital and then see the patient and family in the nursing home to help them understand prognosis of current illness, treatment, and develop a plan for worsening symptoms and preferred treatment settings prior to acute events. CCA will deploy employed nurse practitioners or depending on the SNF high performing teams currently based in the SNF to care for our patients and incentivize goals of care discussions and frequent assessments in the SNF. We will mentor leaders in each facility to assume responsibility for TIPS conferences, which enable multidisciplinary teams to identify system failures and redesign care in a nonblaming manner. Families and patients will share their perspectives with direct care staff on failures in care in 20% of these meetings and lessons learned will be shared in a learning network of in-person quarterly meetings, monthly teleconferences and email updates.

CCA will also explore the provision of financial incentives to participating facilities and physicians based on measures to increase patient and family engagement, lower readmissions, and improve care coordination between SNF, primary care, and hospital teams. The pilot model of care for CCA would be developed in three SNFs in 2013, with expansion to the entire CCA patient population in future years.