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Qualis Health to Lead Commonwealth Fund National Medical Home Initiative for Safety-Net Clinics

SEATTLE – Qualis Health, a Seattle-based nonprofit quality improvement organization, will lead a groundbreaking five year initiative to support 50 safety-net clinics in achieving high performance through transformation to the patient-centered medical home model of healthcare delivery. The project is supported by a grant from The Commonwealth Fund, an independent foundation working toward health reform and a high performance health system. Qualis Health will partner with the MacColl Institute for Healthcare Innovation, a part of the Group Health Center for Health Studies, in the implementation of the initiative.

According to Jonathan Sugarman, MD, MPH, president and CEO of Qualis Health and principal investigator for the project, “The medical home is a concept whose time has come, and this important initiative will demonstrate that practices caring for patients in the safety-net can deliver care that meets world class standards for quality, accessibility and patient satisfaction.”

A growing number of health policy experts, physician groups, government agencies, and health care purchasers have concluded that implementation of the medical home model will result in improvements in quality, patient satisfaction, and effective use of health care resources.

The medical home model is an approach to primary care that emphasizes timely access to medical services, enhanced communication between patients and their health care team, coordination and continuity of care, and an intensive focus on quality and safety. Safety-net clinics include practices such as community health centers that provide care for underserved or economically disadvantaged communities, including many Medicaid enrollees and uninsured individuals.

Physician organizations including the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American College of Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Osteopathic Association, along with over 100 consumer groups, employers, and other organizations, have endorsed the medical home concept as an approach to improve the health of patients and the viability of the health care delivery system.

“Research shows that establishing patient-centered medical homes has the potential to help move the U.S. toward a high performance health system that achieves better access, improved quality, and great efficiency for all Americans,” said Commonwealth Fund President Karen Davis. “This project will allow us to analyze the elements of a patient-centered medical home and enable us to replicate its successes.”

A recent study by The Commonwealth Fund found that adults who had a medical home had better access to needed care, improved management of chronic conditions, and a higher rate of preventive screening than among those without a medical home. In addition, disparities in care among racial and ethnic minorities were reduced or eliminated among patients with a medical home. The report concluded that community health centers and other public clinics should be supported in their efforts to build medical homes.

Group Health's MacColl Institute brings to the project its experience developing, testing, and disseminating the Chronic Care Model. This model summarizes the basic elements for improving care in health systems at the community, organization, practice, and patient levels, and has been a key element in the design of the medical home.

Qualis Health and MacColl Institute staff will provide technical assistance to participating practices in four regions of the U.S. The assistance will include training to improve timeliness and availability of appointments, to improve communication, and to support improvement of team-based care delivery, customized according to each patient's needs.

In the initiative's first year, project staff will develop the training curriculum, engage key stakeholders, develop a request for proposals, and select the regions and clinics that will participate in the program. Funding for the first year of the project is \$700,000, and is expected to total \$6.7 million for the five year initiative.

About Qualis Health

Qualis Health is dedicated to improving the quality of healthcare delivery and health outcomes for individuals and populations across the nation. Founded in 1974, the nonprofit healthcare quality improvement organization (QIO) is headquartered in Seattle, Washington, and has offices in Alaska; Idaho; California; South Carolina; and Nebraska. For additional information about Qualis Health, visit www.qualishealth.org.

About the MacColl Institute for Healthcare Innovation

The mission of the MacColl Institute for Healthcare Innovation is to bridge the worlds of research and clinical care both within Group Health and nationally. Named for founder and pioneering physician, W.A. MacColl, MD, the Institute was created in 1992. Its goal is to develop, evaluate, and disseminate innovations in healthcare delivery. Headquartered in Seattle, the Institute is the national program office for The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's program for improving Chronic Illness Care.

About The Commonwealth Fund

The Commonwealth Fund is an independent foundation working toward health policy reform and a high performance health system.

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