

Mobilizing for action:

A qualitative evaluation of two social care networks and the value of cross-sector collaboration

A collaborative, multi-network evaluation conducted in partnership with CyncHealth, Intermountain Health, and Unite Us shed light on the unique motivators, facilitators, and barriers to participation in social care coordination networks from the perspective of CBOs.

“We would not have the capacity in our organizations to handle these types of referrals without something like Unite Us. So, please don't go away. We are all relying on you a lot.”

– CBO Partner

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation team examined the facilitators and barriers to community-engaged social care coordination from the perspective of community-based organizations (CBOs). The evaluation found that one shared system of record across care sectors can positively impact the resolution of health-related social needs, particularly among ethnic and racial minority community members, to advance health equity.

- Qualitative methods, including key informant interviews and focus groups, were conducted with organizations in the Unite Nebraska and Unite Utah network geographic regions.
- The team conducted 21 key informant interviews with Unite Us-participating and non-participating CBO and community health leaders, as well as focus groups of seven end users of the Unite Us Platform, representing a cross-sample of CBO service types.
- Participants were selected based on their respective knowledge of and experience with supporting clients with social needs, overseeing teams of Unite Us end users, or personally adopting a social care coordination platform.

Key Findings

Findings highlighted the importance of social care coordination from the community perspective, and the value in providing an effective tool to streamline cross-sector collaboration. The primary findings from this evaluation included:

- 1 Community-based organizations are more likely to participate in coordinated care networks if there is a feeling that the community is truly “in this together.” Meaning, there is broad consensus and buy-in across health and social care providers with all partners agreeable to the same care coordination standards.
- 2 At the intra-organizational level, clearly communicated expectations around integrating care coordination into daily workflows—and identification of appropriate staff and programs designated to send and receive referrals—are critical to driving adoption.
- 3 Consistently seeking opportunities to listen to the community’s needs and conduct outreach in partnership with respected healthcare, health payer, and nonprofit champions is important to driving community-level buy-in. This collaborative engagement approach should extend to frequent outreach and follow-up with participating community partners.



Takeaways

From the community perspective, siloed service provision and documentation have long impeded the ability to provide effective, whole-person care. The greatest value in adopting one system of record to streamline cross-sector collaboration is the ability for social service providers to participate in the care continuum and for all providers to maintain visibility throughout a patient's care journey. Additionally, a robust, locally reflective, social care dataset is critical to address the true needs and priorities of the communities they reflect and serve and to advance health equity.

Community-engaged care coordination is an emerging best practice to systematically improve access to and quality of care in order to address the drivers of health (DOH). While this evaluation found broad consensus across community organizations that technology-powered care coordination is needed, barriers to full community participation exist—such as competing systems of record and under-resourced community services. These challenges must be addressed through interoperability with existing systems of record (e.g. electronic health records); novel products that incorporate CBOs into value-based payment models; and an all-in outreach effort that partners technology solutions, health systems and payers, local government, and respected nonprofits to garner full community-level buy-in.

About

In 2019, **CyncHealth**, known as Nebraska Health Information Initiative (NEHII) at the time, began a partnership with Unite Us to support social care coordination and data exchange between health and social service providers throughout the state of Nebraska. The CyncHealth and Unite Us partnership has since expanded from Nebraska to cover a multi-state region in the Central U.S., including Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Minnesota, Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota, and North Dakota. CyncHealth proposed this evaluation initiative to inform their approach to community engagement, in collaboration with Unite Us, and establish recommendations to support organizational and end-user adoption of the Unite Us Platform.

Intermountain Health led the Alliance for the Determinants of Health demonstration, a three-year community collaboration formed to impact the affordability of healthcare, improve participants' well-being, and be a model for change by addressing social determinants of health (SDoH) among SelectHealth Community Care (Medicaid) members. The Alliance seeks to improve SDoH for participants by assessing needs and connecting members to resources. To support this work, Intermountain partnered with Unite Us in 2019 to deliver the technology solution for care coordination in the Alliance project's two target counties and beyond.

Unite Us is the nation's leading software company enabling collaboration across sectors to improve the health and well-being of communities. Unite Us' secure solutions establish a new standard of care that identifies and predicts social care needs, helps connect people to services, and leverages meaningful outcomes data to further drive community investment. Through Unite Us' national network and software, community-based organizations, government agencies, health plans, and healthcare providers are all connected to better collaborate and meet the needs of the individuals in their communities.

Learn more:



www.UniteUs.com

[CyncHealth SDOH](#)

[Alliance for the Determinants of Health](#)