

Advancing Clinical Excellence Network

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Advancing Clinical Excellence Network?

We're a partnership of 12 organizations in seven states that specialize in helping medical practices reduce clinical administrative burdens while improving quality of care and outcomes. We have applied for funding from CMS to conduct this work under the Clinician Quality Improvement Contractor Clinician-Focused Task Order issued under the Network of Quality Improvement and Innovations Contractors Initiative. If we receive this contract award, our work with medical practices is expected to begin in early 2020.

Who are the 12 partners, in which states do they work, and what is their role with the Network?

We're a collection of 12 partners across seven states with expertise in CMS requirements and initiatives and helping practices thrive. Below is a description of each organization and our role in this initiative.

[Altarum](#) is based in Ann Arbor, Michigan with staff and offices across the United States. Altarum is the lead organization within the Network, bringing decades of experience in health care innovation, quality improvement, health IT and health care analytics. In this initiative, Altarum will provide support to clinicians in Michigan, Ohio, Florida, and New York.

[The Health Collaborative](#) is the oldest and most successful health information exchange in the country, exchanging over 15 million clinical results monthly in real time. The Health Collaborative will provide quality improvement and data support to clinicians in Kentucky and southern Ohio.

[Kentucky's Regional Extension Center](#) at the University of Kentucky has provided technical assistance to over 5,000 clinicians in the state, including small and rural practices. They will provide technical assistance to providers in Kentucky.

[Michigan Center for Rural Health](#) works with rural providers across Michigan on clinical quality improvement including programming related to opioids and behavioral health, operational efficiencies, and maximizing performance in various VBP programs. Along with Altarum, they will provide technical assistance to providers in Michigan.

[Medical Advantage Group](#) has two decades of experience helping clinicians with value-based initiatives. They will provide support to clinicians in Ohio and Michigan.

[Northwestern University's Chicago Health IT Regional Extension Center](#) has worked with over 15,000 clinicians on programs including EHR Meaningful Use and QPP-SURS. They will provide support to clinicians in Illinois.

[Northern Illinois University's Illinois Health Information Technology Regional Extension Center](#) provides technical assistance to over 9,800 clinicians and practices. They specialize in using remote tools and distance learning to help small and rural practices. They will provide support to providers in Illinois.

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[Purdue Healthcare Advisors](#) at Purdue University in Indiana has worked with more than 150 hospitals and trained more than 3,000 health care and public health professionals, and helped more than 3,000 physicians with EHR Meaningful Use compliance. They will provide support to providers in Indiana.

[RAZR Solutions](#) specializes in patient and family engagement, organizational and change management, and qualitative and quantitative analysis for health care delivery improvement. RAZR will provide support to clinicians in Florida along with Altarum.

[FAIRHealth](#) is a nonprofit organization that collects and manages the nation's largest database of private health insurance claims. Their claims data will help providers working with our Network on measure development and performance analysis.

[The National Kidney Foundation of Michigan](#) works to reduce kidney disease and other chronic conditions, including obesity, diabetes, and hypertension by designing and implementing clinical interventions. They will help our Network create and customize interventions in these areas.

[PFCC Partners](#) (Patient and Family Centered Care) develops structures to aid practices in improving patient engagement. They will advise our Network on patient engagement intervention design.

What are the benefits of participating in the Advancing Clinical Excellence Network?

The Advancing Clinical Excellence Network offers benefits to medical practices that extend beyond quality improvement measures, from obtaining CME/MOC credits to easing the burden of EHRs. Here are a few of them:

- **Earn CME/MOC Part IV Credits.** You can improve your practice while earning credits recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties and other accreditation bodies. See more about Altarum's CME/MOC offerings at Altarum.org/CE.
- **Ease EHR and Reporting Burdens.** We'll help you improve your use of technology, ease the documentation process, and reduce reporting burdens with technical assistance from experts with knowledge of over 60 EHR products.
- **Gain Recognition for Excellent Care.** Ensure your superior care is recognized and promoted to payers with our national provider recognition program, [Bridges to Excellence](#).
- **Receive Insight on CMS Initiatives and Requirements.** Gain insight on best practices in CMS quality improvement initiatives informed by our previous work with thousands of practices on topics from reimbursement standards to innovative care and payment models. Additionally, our expertise will ensure your practice is informed of CMS latest initiatives and requirements.
- **Work with Organizations in Your State.** Receive support from a Clinical Excellence partner in your state who is accessible and understands the local healthcare landscape.

Will my practice receive any incentive payments for participating?

There are no incentive payments, but by participating in this program your medical practice can improve performance in CMS value-based programs. In addition, your quality scores will be listed on the CMS [Physician Compare](#) website, and your superior care can also be promoted through our provider recognition program, [Bridges to Excellence](#).

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Altarum is accredited by the Michigan State Medical Society to provide continuing medical education (CME) credits. Altarum is an approved portfolio sponsor by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) to provide Maintenance of Certification (MOC) Part IV credits.

If my practice chooses to participate, how much time will our clinical staff need to devote to this and over what time period?

Our goal is to reduce the clinical administrative burdens your clinicians face by implementing streamlined workflows, targeted interventions, and other quality improvement strategies based on our decades of experience with thousands of practices across the country. Over the duration of this program, we anticipate your clinicians will save time through the interventions of this program.

What type of support will my practice receive from your Network? How frequent will it be?

A dedicated quality improvement advisor from one of the 12 Network partners will be assigned to your practice to guide your clinicians through the adoption of quality improvement strategies. They will be in close contact with you throughout the process to conduct training, provide guidance, answer questions, and assist with reporting and documentation.

What are the documentation requirements for the program?

There is a simple enrollment process, and some documentation is required for reporting on outcomes in the four areas of improvement, which include the following:

1. Behavioral health and decreased opioid misuse
2. Patient safety
3. Chronic disease self-management
4. Care transitions

Your dedicated quality improvement advisor will be available to assist you with reporting.

What are some of the clinical interventions you offer?

We offer several clinical interventions, particularly in areas that are especially challenging or timely for providers, such as responsible opioid prescribing, prescription drug monitoring, telepsychiatry, patient medication adherence, patient engagement, and chronic condition management.

We also provide customized technical assistance to help providers with QPP MIPS, EHR optimization, interoperability, data/measure extraction and analysis, workflow development and implementation, and performance feedback based on data analysis.

For information on interventions, technical assistance and how we can customize our support to meet your goals, contact us at ClinicalExcellence@altarum.org.

Can I choose the interventions in which my practice participates?

The interventions are largely based on areas CMS has identified for improvement, but we are able to customize them to advance the goals and needs of your practice. These areas are behavioral health and opioid misuse, patient safety, chronic disease self-management, and care transitions.

Can I participate in other CMS programs (i.e. QPP SURS, CPC+, Advanced APM) and The Advancing Clinical Excellence Network?

Yes. Providers can continue to participate in or join other CMS programs while working with us. However, providers can only work with one CMS Clinician Quality Improvement Contractor (CQIC).

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Who is eligible to receive support from the Advancing Clinical Excellence Network?

All clinicians—physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, and others—are eligible to participate. We work with independent providers, rural practices, in addition to larger practices and health systems, as well Physician Organizations and ACOs.

Does my practice need an EHR to participate?

Yes. Medical practices with an EHR will benefit most from this initiative.

Will your network need data/reports from my practice?

Yes. However, we will dedicate to your practice a quality improvement advisor who is well-versed in a number of EHRs, ensuring this process is as easy as possible. In addition, the quality improvement advisor working with your practice can assist with not only extracting data from your EHR but running QRDA reports, etc.

Can I earn CME/MOC credits for participating?

Yes. The lead organization in this Network, Altarum, offers clinicians the opportunity to earn 30-50 Performance Improvement AMA PRA Category 1™ credits and 20-25 MOC Part IV Improvement in Medical Practice credits. Continuing education topics include reducing childhood dental disease, advancing responsible opioid prescribing, transforming depression, and transforming trauma-informed care. See more about our CME/MOC program at Altarum.org/CE.

Are the requirements for this initiative similar to those of the MIPS program?

Requirements for both programs involve reporting data (primarily clinical quality measures) from EHRs and working on quality improvement goals to satisfy the aims of each program, which are similar. If you have specific questions, please send an email to ClinicalExcellence@altarum.org.

What is the cost to participate? And where can I sign up?

There is no cost to participate; this program will be funded by CMS. Pre-enroll by filling out a short form at Altarum.org/enroll.

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