**Hospice Utilization**

**Targeting Resource Use Effectively**

Special Innovation Project Brief

**Project purpose**
Increase referrals to and utilization of hospice care for eligible patients earlier in the course of treatment in three Minnesota communities: Alexandria, Mora, and Waconia. This means for our:

- Patients: improved quality of life
- Health care system: reduced medical costs through appropriate care

**Key accomplishment**
Began to bridge the communication gap between physicians and patients about how to approach hospice utilization more openly.

**Deliverables**
- Develop a hot spotting index to identify zip code level data where the potential need for increased hospice utilization was most needed
- Facilitate multi-stakeholder community planning workshops
- Create materials for dissemination in physician clinics, assisted living facilities, hospitals, home care agencies, parish nursing, and long term care facilities to increase the number of appropriate admissions to hospice and result in longer length of stays
- Design a list of “Ask Your Doctor” questions for patients to have when conversing with their doctors about their serious illness
- Develop and deliver presentations to physicians and other health professionals about making timely hospice referrals

**Project results**
For the three communities, early results show an increase in the use of hospice by 8.7% and a longer time in hospice for patients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of stay (days)</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>43.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16.9</td>
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* through July

**Future opportunities**
- Open communication between patients and physicians for conversations about treatment options for a serious illness or about death and dying
- Reach more communities with project’s training materials to increase hospice use in states with low utilization
- If Minnesota physicians increased appropriate hospice referrals comparable to other states and served an additional 7,000 patients, they could achieve an incremental savings of more than $16 million
Participants
Alexandria, MN:
- Alexandria Clinic
- Church of St. Mary
- Douglas County Hospital
- Ecumen Bethany Community
- First Lutheran Church
- Galeon of Osakis
- Glacial Ridge Home Care & Hospice (lead partner)
- Glenwood Village Care Center
- Good Samaritan Society - Glenwood Lakeview
- Hospice of Douglas County (lead partner)
- Knute Nelson (lead partner)
- Max J. Beilke VA Clinic
- Minnewaska Community Health Services
- Sanford Health, Alexandria
- Windmill Ponds Assisted Living

Mora, MN:
- East Central Senior Resource Center
- Fairview Lakes HomeCaring & Hospice (lead partner)
- FirstLight Health System
- Kanabec County Public Health Hospice (lead partner)
- Scandia House of Mora
- St Croix Hospice (lead partner)

Waconia, MN:
- Good Samaritan Society - Waconia and Westview Acres Assisted Living
- Lakeview Clinic
- Ridgeview Medical Center