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Oregon providers moving toward primary care home model

The state of Oregon is looking for health care providers to adopt a primary care model designed for better health and lower costs. Across the state, more than 80 clinics already have applied to be officially recognized by the state as “patient-centered primary care homes.”

Primary care homes offer a team-based approach to care that is focused on keeping people healthy. At its heart, this model of care fosters strong relationships with patients and their families to better treat the whole person. Providers reduce costs and improve care by catching problems earlier, focusing on prevention and wellness, and integrating behavioral health care.

The Mountainview Family Practice in Grants Pass was the first clinic to be recognized as meeting the new standards.

"We saw the opportunity to become recognized for the way we already practice medicine," said Richard Williams, M.D., a family physician at the clinic. "For example, we coordinate care by having a mental health professional come here regularly to meet with patients."

This kind of primary care is central to the state's efforts to improve quality and reduce costs for people served by the Oregon Health Plan. Under the proposed coordinated care organizations, patient-centered primary care homes will be a required element of any health system's provider network.

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“This is a stamp of approval for people looking for clinics and providers that have made a public commitment to patient-centered care,” says Bruce Goldberg, M.D., director of the Oregon Health Authority.

Standards for Oregon’s patient-centered primary care homes include:

- Access to care – Health care teams are there when patients and their families need them.
- Accountability – Providers take responsibility for making sure patients receive the best possible health care.
- Continuity – Providers are partners in care over time.
- Coordination and integration – Providers help patients and their families navigate the health care system to get the care they need in a safe and timely way.
- Person- and family-centered care – Providers recognize that patients and their families are the most important part of the care team – and that they are ultimately responsible for their own overall health and wellness.

“In Oregon, we are lucky to have providers who are willing and able to form their practices around the patient. That’s our vision for all health care in Oregon – if you focus on improved health, you will have better outcomes and ultimately lower costs,” says Governor John Kitzhaber. “That’s the direction our state is going and I applaud those providers who are working with us side by side.”

Any health care practice in Oregon can now apply for recognition to be a patient-centered primary care home. The practice must demonstrate the ability to provide comprehensive services on-site or coordinated through a partnership with other providers in their community.

Criteria, application forms and technical assistance are available online at www.primarycarehome.oregon.gov.

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