



Wellness Advocate

Improving Patient Outcomes and Reducing Cost
through Community Intervention

A Community Approach to Improving Health Outcomes

It is well-documented that engaging in routine preventive care and following medical direction has a positive impact on patient health and recovery- and on healthcare expenses. Though most patients have the motivation and capacity to do well with traditional approaches, there is a small yet critical population that fails to engage in well visits or follow their medical plan. Often, this small cohort of patients accounts for a disproportionate amount of healthcare costs.

Health is not isolated to physical well-being; it is also inextricably tied to social, economic, and environmental conditions that either promote or deter from wellness and quality of life. To achieve the best outcomes for some individuals, it is critical to address each of these important conditions while meeting with people from where they live, work, learn and play.

Innovative projects around the country are improving health outcomes while reducing health costs through designing specific interventions targeted toward high risk or need populations. These efforts often work with patients in their homes and communities. For example, a study at the Children’s Hospital Boston, the top-ranked children’s hospital in the United States, attributed the utilization of community health workers in an asthma initiative program to a 64% reduction in pediatric asthma related emergency department visits (Bramwell 2011). In addition, the program was found to significantly reduce hospital costs with a return on investment (Woods et al. 2011).

The Wellness Advocate Model

The Wellness Advocate Model is designed and implemented based on the success that Youth Advocate Programs (YAP) has had with engaging high and complex need youth, care givers and adults since 1975. YAP has been providing population based care to those connected to or involved with the juvenile justice, child welfare and behavioral health care systems funded by Medicaid and Counties. Upon the passage of the Accountable Care Act (ACA), YAP developed the Wellness Advocate Model to assist care coordinators who are generally office based RN’s, LPN’s or NA’s with making sure individuals follow their ongoing care plans, including attendance at follow-up appointments and to ensure the environmental and social settings support their overall care plan and well-being; in short, a “whole person” approach. The Wellness Advocate Model is flexible and continues to be refined to meet the needs of different medical and community settings and the persons being served.

Patient Engagement Leads to

- ✓ **Reduced Avoidable Admissions**
- ✓ **Reduced Avoidable ER Visits**
- ✓ **Decreased No-Shows**
- ✓ **More Wellness Care**
- ✓ **Better Health**

YAP's Wellness Advocate: Engagement Specialists

Advocates are the linchpin of the Wellness Advocate model. They are culturally and linguistically credible messengers who live in the same communities as the individuals and families they serve. Their educational background varies from paraprofessional through professional, but all have expertise in engaging hard to reach families, role modeling positive behaviors, connecting families with supports and resources to meet their economic, health, education, housing and other social needs, and nurturing positive outcomes.

YAP's "Wellness Advocates" help keep patients focused on wellness and thus reduce the need for emergent and in-patient care. In addition, YAP supports patients and their families in understanding health and in how to maintain wellness after our engagement period ends. The intent of the Advocate is to engage individuals and provide assistance to them by assessing their environmental and social settings to identify obstacles which may be present, preventing them from following their ongoing care plan and are interfering with their day-day healthy living. Once obstacles are identified we work with the individual to create a plan to address these obstacles examples include: identifying natural supports, introducing community resources, identifying transportation resources and ensuring the person has the basics of food, shelter, clothing targeted at supporting their care plan as well as their well-being.

Our care plans include full collaboration among medical providers, family members, and where appropriate, other community supports. They address the specific and individual health, social and environmental needs of each patient, and connect families with positive resources.

For More Information

Cheryl Reeling, *Vice-President*
creeling@yapinc.org/ 717-495-4238

Our model promotes self-monitoring, problem-solving, community connection and patient empowerment. This approach ensures that plans are successfully implemented, sustaining the gains that are made in hospital or outpatient settings and/or preventing the need for such care in the future.

What Patients Would Benefit?

- Patients with chronic diseases, such as asthma, hypertension or diabetes
- Patients with mental illnesses or addictions
- Expecting or new moms
- Patients with transportation issues
- Patients with a history of non-compliance
- Patients with a history of violence
- Children in need of well visits and dental care
- Patients with high social needs
- Patients who don't engage in well visits

Population Based Intervention

YAP's Wellness Advocate programming is population based, meaning tailored to meet the health needs of targeted and specific populations that are struggling. For example, in Altoona and Chambersburg PA, we support individuals with mental illness partnerships with Primary Health Network and Keystone Health, both Federally Qualified Health Centers. In Chicago, our services were targeted toward youth at highest risk of perpetrating or being victims of violence in partnership with Chicago Public Schools.