Engaging in Quality

VNAA Advances Home Health Quality through Identification of Best Practices for Care Transitions
April 2013

Visiting Nurse Associations of America (VNAA) supports, promotes and advances non-profit providers of home and community-based health care, hospice and health promotion services to ensure quality care for their communities. To meet these goals, VNAA recently launched the “Engaging in Quality” initiative to provide resources for evidence-based, quality improvement practices through the identification and distribution of best practices, case studies and other resources to nonprofit health providers across the country. VNAA’s “Engaging in Quality” initiative will help members ensure accountability for performance and remain leaders in improving the experience of care, improving the health of populations, and reducing per capita costs of health care.

The first component of this initiative is VNAA’s “Best Practices for Care Transitions in Home Health.” A primary goal of this first work product is to assist VNAA members and other nonprofit home health providers in reducing hospitalization and improving patient experience. VNAA convened a Best Practices Work Group comprised of clinical and quality improvement leaders to identify and define best practices for these goals, outline critical interventions and/or action steps, develop and/or identify tools, training programs (for both clinical leaders as well as visiting staff) and measurements. The groundbreaking development of the ten “Best Practices for Care Transitions in Home Health” is a result. VNAA believes these best practices can be incorporated into home health organizations to improve the overall quality of care.

A critical next step in VNAA’s commitment to the Engaging in Quality initiative is the formation of a National Advisory Group to provide guidance to the continued development of these and other emerging evidence-based practices in home health. Membership will include both leaders among VNAA members as well as external quality and research leaders in home health and quality leadership. Monthly calls with members to discuss updates on best practices, to share latest research and application of this research to home health, as well as successes from members in applying these practices will take place.

Educational Objectives
This work is the first of its kind focused on overall quality of care for home health agencies. In developing these best practices, VNAA recognized the complexity of the issues and formulated a program to both ensure the accuracy and validity of the best practices. VNAA also recognized the need to incorporate skills training that reflects appropriateness and suitability for application in current home health delivery models. Specifically:

1. Participants and clinical leaders will acquire the tools and education to build the organization’s capacity for change and implementation of the Best Practices.
2. Participants will be able to implement the best practices through the interventions, use of training sessions and tools.

Project Design
VNAA’s Best Practice Work Group reviewed and built upon work accomplished by others in the field, including: Eric Coleman’s Care Transitions Model; the Integrated Care Management for Home Health as developed by Penta Health LLC; the guidance and research of Home Health Quality Improvement (HHQI); the work of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement; and the generous work and successes of VNAA members. An underlying premise of the resulting best practices is the need for clinical staff to utilize the techniques of patient engagement and patient activation, or putting the patient at the center of care.

The identified ten best practices are:
- First visit within 24 hours of hospital discharge or referral - and second visit in 48 hours for identified high risk patients
- Medication Reconciliation
- Identification of high risk patients
- Signs and Symptoms (Red Flags)
- Follow-up visit in 7-14 days after a hospitalization discharge
- “Front Loading” for high risk patients
- Patient Engagement and Activation (health literacy, motivational interviewing, health coaching and a personal health record)
- Falls Risk Assessment and Program
- Depression screening and follow-up
- Pneumonia vaccination

To produce real and sustained performance improvement, organizations need to:

1. Examine their current practices and systems;
2. Restructure their organization to become a learning organization;
3. Learn about the available best practices and tools;
4. Understand data management and proper use; and
5. Provide training programs targeted to clinical and organizational leaders, as well as visiting staff.
Each practice includes a definition, critical intervention, tools, training programs, measurement, helpful hints and references. As evidence-based practice continues to evolve, these standards and practices for home care will also be refined and developed. The final best practices will be available for adoption by nonprofit home health organizations, hospitals and health systems, physician practices, policy makers and others through the VNAA website. Organizations can access the best practices, critical interventions or action steps, tools and background, training programs for clinical leaders and staff, metrics, helpful hints and references or research supporting practice. These practices will continue to evolve and the content management web site will be updated to reflect the latest research and evidence-based practices once available. VNAA will track user downloads and implementation to determine the level of dissemination of the best practices.

Experts and Contributors
This body of work reflects the contributions of many individuals and organizations and VNAA is grateful for their expertise and commitment to this work. They include: Amanda Holst from Visiting Nurse Association in Omaha, NE; Celeste Twardon from Home Nursing Agency in Altoona, PA; Claire Zangerle from Visiting Nurse Association of Ohio Cleveland, OH; Denise Martel from Concord Regional VNA in Concord, NH; Emma Baron from Pathways Home Health, Hospice and Private Duty in Sunnyvale, CA; Elizabeth Madigan from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, OH; Gale Bucher from Christiana Care VNA in Wilmington, DE; Mary Ann O'Connor from VNA Care Network and Hospice in Worcester, MA; Mary Jean McKeveny from Dominican Sisters Family Health Service New York, NY; Merrily Evdokimoff from M & J Associates in Stow, MA; Misty Kevech from West Virginia Medical Institute / Quality Insights, Van Voorhis, PA; Pat Marks from Dominican Sisters Family Health Service in New York, NY; Paula Suter from Sutter Center for Integrated Care in Fairfield, CA; Sally Sobolewski from Visiting Nurse Service of New York in New York, NY; Margaret Hadley, VNAA Clinical Consultant; Lucy Saia from Home Health & Hospice Care in Nashua, NH; and Karen Utterback from McKesson. VNAA’s Best Practice Work Group will continue to provide the oversight and input on the most up-to date research and evidence-based practices for the field of home care

Timeline
VNAA’s Best Practices Work Group has completed development of tools, resources and training programs each of the ten best practices. The materials are currently being formatted in a comprehensive web site in the form of a content management system. VNAA plans a late summer 2013 launch, adhering to the following timeline:

- June 1: product inventory completed
- August 1: website developed
- August 20: website user evaluation and key concepts testing completed
• September 4: product launch

Recognition and Participation
VNAA seeks additional funding to support the development of educational materials and resources to facilitate the adoption of the best practices. These educational materials and resources include an executive briefing series of face-to-face events, educational webinars on the best practices program, electronic and print media, and a comprehensive website to serve as a content management system. Sponsor organizations can elect to receive benefits based on contribution levels and including:

1. Recognition as an Engaging In Quality Partner on the following:
   a. Engaging In Quality Web page at www.VNAA.org
   b. All print and electronic promotional materials
   c. Participation on a training call on leadership’s role in performance improvement
2. Opportunity to participate in sessions and collaborative events in support of the best practices program
3. Additional recognition as agreed between VNAA and sponsoring organization.

Interested organizations should contact:
Margaret Terry
Vice President, Quality and Innovation
VNAA
mterry@vnaa.org
(202) 384-1431