

Flex Program Fundamentals 2018

About the Flex Monitoring Team





INTRODUCTION

The Flex Monitoring Team (FMT) is a consortium of the Rural Health Research Centers located at the Universities of Minnesota, North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Southern Maine. With a 5-year (2013-2018) cooperative agreement award from the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP)(PHS Grant No. U27RH01080), the FMT monitors and evaluates the Flex Program by developing relevant quality, financial, and community benefit performance measures and reporting systems. FMT research assesses the impact of the Flex program on rural hospitals and communities and examines the ability of the State Offices of Rural Health to achieve overall Flex Program objectives: improving access to quality health care services, improving the financial and operational performance of Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs), and engaging rural communities in health care system development.

HOW THE FLEX MONITORING TEAM CAN HELP YOU

The FMT's researchers have years of experience examining topics and issues that are directly-relevant to CAHs and the Flex Program. Ongoing and annual research projects typically result in publications that you and other state Flex Coordinators can use to gain a better understanding of CAH finance, quality performance, and community impact and to support your work (in presentations & meetings, in grant applications, in publications, etc.) with CAH-relevant evidence.

The [FMT website](#) provides access to all FMT publications, presentation slides, data reports, project descriptions, and more.

In March 2016, the FMT launched the Critical Access Hospital Measurement and Performance Assessment System (CAHMPAS), an online data query system which allows state Flex Coordinators to explore the financial, quality, and community-benefit performance of CAHs. CAHMPAS allows you to create custom graphs that compare CAH performance for measures that you define: by location, net patient revenue, or other factors. Data for CAHs in your state are identified by name; data for CAHs in other states are shown but not identified by name. Visit the [CAHMPAS webpage](#) for more information and contact the FMT for login credentials: monitoring@flexmonitoring.org.

The FMT uses an email listserv to disseminate reports and publications. As a state Flex Coordinator, you are automatically subscribed to this list as a requirement of your grant award. Other Flex Program / CAH staff in your state can easily subscribe by contacting the FMT or submitting information via the FMT's homepage.

ONGOING PROJECTS

CAHMPAS Query System Maintenance and Development

Purpose of the Project: to prepare updated data for CAHMPAS (described above), load this data into the system, develop new features, maintain existing features, and provide technical assistance to registered users. In the coming year, this project will develop and test a summary dashboard and summary reporting option for CAHs, which will allow users to select their own set of indicators, view multiple indicators simultaneously, and produce a comprehensive report of all or their own set of indicators.

Maintaining and Updating the National CAH Database

Purpose of the Project: to continue the tracking of CAH conversions and closures. A CAH management information dataset, housed at the University of North Carolina, will be updated with information on conversions supplied by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). These data are also used to update products on the Monitoring Team website, including a spreadsheet that lists all certified CAHs, a map of current CAHs, and a new



table that contains state-level totals of the number of CAHs, and the number with rehabilitation distinct part units (DPU) and the number with psychiatric DPUs.

Measuring Community Impact and Benefit of CAHs

Purpose of the Project: to measure the community benefit and impact performance of CAHs nationally and by state using data from the American Hospital Association Annual Survey. This project is based on continuing work that has been ongoing under the previous cooperative agreement. This project builds upon previous Flex Monitoring Team and University of Southern Maine activities related to understanding the community impact and benefit activities of CAHs and the development and field-testing of appropriate community impact and performance measures. The data will be used to prepare national and state-level reports for CAH activity in this area.

Analyzing Financial and Operational Performance of CAHs

Purpose of the Project: using data from CMS Medicare Cost Reports, the primary purpose of the CAH Financial Indicators Report is to provide CAH administrators with comparative financial indicators. The data in this report can be used to assess financial performance across time and in relation to other similar institutions.

Analyzing Quality Reporting and Improvement of CAHs

Purpose of the Project: to measure the quality performance of CAHs nationally and by state on an ongoing basis using quality measure data from the CMS Hospital Compare database and other relevant quality data sources, including Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Project (MBQIP) data. This project is based on continuing work that has been ongoing under the previous cooperative agreement. It will be an ongoing project for all five years of the cooperative agreement, with national and state-level reports prepared annually.

NEW PROJECTS, 2017-18

Evaluation of State Flex Program Impact and Performance: Innovative Projects and PIMS data

This project continues previous work to monitor and evaluate the implementation and impact of innovative programs and assess the extent to which they provide models to be used in other Flex programs. It will also continue using the Performance Improvement and Measurement System (PIMS) data to determine if PIMS measures can be improved to ensure the reliability, validity, and usability of the data to evaluate the Flex Program over time. The project will culminate in a PIMS Analysis Report.

Evaluation of State Flex Programs' Projects Targeting EMS Implementation of Standards and Best Practices Related to Time Critical Diagnoses

This project will analyze the efforts of State Flex Program initiatives to support the development of time critical diagnoses (TCD) systems of care. This will culminate with a policy brief summarizing the best practices and providing models that can be used by other state Flex programs to support TCD systems of care in CAH communities.

Population Health Evaluation: The Role of CAHs in Providing Core Health Care Services in Rural Communities

This project will analyze the efforts of CAHs to develop systems of care that support the provision of core health care services including primary care, emergency medical services, long-term care, mental health and substance abuse services, oral health care, and public health services. We plan to identify opportunities for CAHs to



develop core health care services in their own communities and see how CAHs can be supported in developing rural systems of care to meet the population health needs of their communities. This will culminate in two policy briefs, one summarizing the development of select core health services by CAHs, and the other discussing ways in which state Flex programs can support the development of these services and rural systems of care with CAHs as the hubs.

Analysis of Evidence-based Stroke Quality Improvement Programs for CAHs

This project will identify successful evidence-based programs to improve stroke care that could be replicated in CAHs. This will culminate with a policy brief targeted at state Flex Coordinators that includes information on successful stroke quality improvement programs applicable to CAHs.

RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

The Flex Monitoring Team publishes research findings in the forms of briefing papers (detailed, comprehensive reports), policy briefs (shorter overviews paired with key findings), data summary reports (comprehensive collections of data), topic-specific toolkits, and state-specific reports. All publications are searchable by topic, date, or keyword, and are freely available for download at www.flexmonitoring.org.

Here are the most recent FMT publications:

- State Flex Program Rural EMS Assessment Strategies ([Policy Brief](#))
- HCAHPS Results for CAHs, 2016 ([Data Summary Report](#))
- CAH Financial Indicators Report: Summary of Medians by State ([Data Summary Report](#))

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