ElevateHealth

Community Health Action Teams

Rapid Response and Intensive, Short-Term Care Management for High-Risk Individuals

Keeping people healthy requires an ecosystem of care — one in which organizations work together in complementary ways to promote health and well-being. Hospitals provide expert, sophisticated medical care, often for complex cases, while primary care and specialty clinics meet other care needs, including the management of chronic conditions. Social services also play an important role, as they are designed to help people manage the social determinants of health, a variety of environmental factors — including unemployment, food scarcity and substance use — that affect a person's health and their access to health care.

Still, vulnerable populations are often not made aware of or unable to access this ecosystem, and, as a result, they seek care solely from hospitals and emergency rooms. Unfortunately, this means important personal needs are often left unaddressed, and that essential hospital resources are strained.

The Community Health Action Teams (CHAT) at Elevate Health assist Pierce County residents whose medical and social challenges are so broad and complex that they turn to hospitals for most of their medical needs. With CHAT, our goal is to give these individuals — all of whom

are likely to be readmitted to the hospital, and have risks related to substance use, chronic disease or mental health — access to medical and social services.

With CHAT, people receive rapid, centralized and client-centered help in meeting their medical and social needs. At the same time, CHAT allows hospitals to focus their resources on patients who need hospital-level services.

CHAT is one of our central care coordination services. It shares that distinction with two other programs, Health Homes and Pathways Community HUB. Together, the three services form the basis of our Care Continuum Network (CCN). The CCN is an ever-expanding network of services designed to bring disparate programs together to support health from preconception to end of life while reducing silos and barriers. With CHAT, and with the help of our partners, we are building a stronger, more equitable and more cost-effective community ecosystem of care in Pierce County.

What is Elevate Health?

At Elevate Health, we innovate and collaborate to create purposeful health care reform in Washington state. Our mission is to build and drive community coalitions that transform health systems and advance whole-person health for all. As an Accountable Communities of Health (ACH) organization, we accomplish this work

by addressing the core challenges of inequitable health systems and practices in our community, region and state.

People with substance-use challenges or chronic medical or mental health conditions often contend with additional obstacles to staying well and safe, such as a lack of shelter or transportation. With CHAT, Elevate Health and its partners are providing whole-person care while better integrating Pierce County's network of health and social services.

The Hospital and the Ecosystem

Hospitals are part of a comprehensive ecosystem of care that also includes clinics, shelters, food banks and other community resources. Vulnerable populations, however, don't always use the entire ecosystem. Instead, they visit their local hospital repeatedly, often for medical care that would be better and more inexpensively provided elsewhere. This high level of utilization is an ineffective use of a hospital's resources, especially in non-profit hospitals, where resources are sometimes stretched. Just as important, an individual's non-medical needs — which are deeply connected to their health — remain unmet.

To interrupt this pattern of hospital overuse, and to increase an individual's access to the care they need, we piloted Community Health Action Teams (CHAT) with Sea Mar Community Health Centers and MultiCare to develop a rapid-response that disrupts this pattern of use, helping Medicaid patients in Pierce County access the entire ecosystem of care — and take better care of themselves in the process. We are now working with non-exclusive, delivery system partners to expand CHAT to people across the region so they may become healthier and more independent while helping the ecosystem of care become more efficient and cost-effective.

CHAT: For Your Patients and Clients

What to Expect

FREE AND RESPONSIVE SERVICES
After a provider makes a referral to Elevate Health's Care Continuum Network (CCN), the CCN notifies the Community Health Action Team (CHAT) at Sea Mar. Referred individuals typically receive a call from CHAT within three days, at which point they decide whether or not to participate in this program. CHAT is a free service.

CLIENT-CENTERED CARE
CHAT focuses on what the client wants. The first call or visit (to the client's home, the hospital, a shelter, or another convenient location) includes a review of the client's medical history. It also includes a conversation about other needs and concerns, such as food insecurity or domestic violence, among other factors that can affect the client's health or access to care. CHAT then helps clients find the medical, mental health and social services that best meet their needs. And, although some programs require clients to be substance-free while using the program, CHAT does not. Instead, we support clients in finding substance use counseling and/or using harm reduction techniques.

OPTIONS
After clients become accustomed to using a larger ecosystem of care, CHAT may refer them to one of the two other services in Elevate Health's CCN – the Pathways Community HUB program or Health Homes – for further help.

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Meet the Team

CHAT, founded in 2020, serves individuals at high-risk for being readmitted to the hospital (please see the first sidebar for details). The team helps individuals understand the entire care ecosystem and how it can best help them. In doing so, we build their confidence in navigating that ecosystem and in securing services and resources — including housing, medical care and counseling for mental health challenges and/or substance use, among others — that support their health and well-being.

The team includes:

CHAT Personnel

This rapid-response team consists of a nurse practitioner and a behavioral health technician. After an initial meeting, CHAT connects each person with medical clinics and specialists, as well as social services (such as shelters, substance use counseling sites, food banks and language classes). In this way, people receive much-needed help from compassionate providers while learning how to navigate care options beyond the hospital.

Our Partners

Our CHAT partners include primary care providers, clinics, behavioral health providers, social service agencies and community-based organizations, among others.

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Our organization seeded the CHAT pilot and recruited all the CHAT referral and social service partners. We also facilitate CHAT data into the Community Data Trust, using secure, HIPAA-compliant and HITRUST processes to monitor and guide member enrollment, needs, and engagement. The community-governed data trust ingests and encrypts data from multiple sources – such as criminal justice, tribal, education and human services agencies – thus serving as a central resource to assess whole-person health and address community health challenges.

Today and Tomorrow

In assessing CHAT's work, Elevate Health aims to increase its measures when it comes to individuals' use of hospital services and the length of hospital stays. We anticipate both factors will decrease as the program connects patients with primary-care doctors and with the larger ecosystem of care that is available to them. CHAT also follows an individual's attendance at appointments with medical and behavioral health care providers, a process that allows personnel to stay connected and in touch with patients' needs.

For More Information

If you would like to learn more about Community Health Action Teams, develop your own program, or to become a referral partner, we would enjoy hearing from you.

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