



Measurement project update: Building regional evidence for SDOH interventions

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With funding from the NYS Health Foundation and Care Compass Network (CCN), Rural Health Network of SCNY is conducting a two-year project (2019-2020) to improve measurement of Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) among rural community-based organizations (CBOs).

In Year 1, we focused on learning and sharing best practices in SDOH measurement from CCN cohort projects and local CBO leaders. Notable achievements in 2019 include:

- Eight benchmark return-on-investment calculations completed for social determinants interventions currently in use by the CCN cohort management program
- Five filmed interviews with CBO leaders completed, with the intent to inform and support other CBO leaders in the transitions to come
- SDOH measurement capacity assessments for Rural Health Network, Tioga Opportunities, and Mothers & Babies Perinatal Network, resulting in the following broad recommendations:
 - Gather existing grant- and funder-specific data into agency-wide information
 - Use guiding questions to determine impact on the people served: Was their immediate need met? Were any long-term needs met? Did the person's health improve? Did their use of the health system and associated costs improve?
 - Know which metrics are relevant to payers and healthcare systems depending on which population you are working with

In Year 2, we will apply these best practices to prepare small and rural CBOs to compete in the emerging Value-Based Payment (VBP) environment. We will calculate actual return on

the cohort projects, continue strengthening our internal data processes, and produce additional CBO-oriented content for the transition to VBP.

Over the course of our engagement in SDOH measurement and VBP preparation, we have identified an additional priority for future work: increasing regional research around the effectiveness of SDOH interventions. Despite the general consensus among traditional funders that evidence-based interventions (EBIs) are a gold standard and do not require additional proof, **some VBP partners (managed care organizations, healthcare systems, etc.) have shown a reluctance to fund EBIs and SDOH initiatives without first seeing results specific to their members, in their region.** This self-fulfilling prophecy - no funding means no program, which means no data with which to prove it works - puts CBOs at a disadvantage when negotiating with a potential VBP partner. We can mitigate this disadvantage by actively working to increase the output of CBO-led, region-specific research in New York State.

Current and future activities to address this issue might include:

- Identifying strong candidates for SDOH pilot projects among rural CBOs' existing programs
- Encouraging programs to collect key information such as clients' insurance plan and health system affiliation
- Building connections between CBOs and academic partners who can provide research capacity
- Facilitating local data sharing by setting up scheduled data requests between CBOs and external data partners (health systems, payers, Medicaid Redesign entities, Regional Health Information Organizations, etc.)

If you would like to share thoughts on this topic or would like additional information about the RHN Social Determinants Measurement project, please contact Emma Nalin, Project Coordinator, at enalin@rhnsny.org. Look for quarterly updates from this project in the NYSARH newsletter.