

Another small state that has a high ranking in The Commonwealth Fund's state scorecard is Iowa. By finding a way to expand coverage, while creating groups and programs designed to increase the performance of their health system, Iowa has managed to consistently provide a high level of care to its citizens.

The quality of Iowa's healthcare is largely influenced through the Iowa Healthcare Collaborative (IHC). Created in 2004, the IHC serves as a partnership between the Iowa Hospital Association and the Iowa Medical Society to improve healthcare in Iowa. IHC brings physicians, hospitals, insurers, employers, government officials, consumers, and other community partners together to improve healthcare and lower costs. The IHC also collects data, and uses the data to make recommendations to hospitals, insurers, and employers. IHC also works closely with national organizations to improve quality and patient safety.

What IHC really provides is a forum, where new developments in healthcare practice can be discussed and, if possible, begin the process of implementation.

*Current projects include: translating lessons learned from the IHC's Medical Home Learning Community, an initiative to make population-based care a core competency of all Iowa physicians, into standards for patient-centered medical homes; protecting patients by curbing health care-related infections; assisting hospitals to establish Medical Emergency Rapid Response Teams to bring critical care to the patient bedside at the first sign of decline (108 or 117 Iowa hospitals are participating); issuing simple "MedCard" information sheets about medications to improve communication between patients and health care providers; hosting Learning Communities to increase health system efficiency based on "Lean" techniques originally developed by Toyota; and serving as the Iowa field office for the national 5 Million Lives Campaign (5M) to reduce incidents of medical harm in all 117 Iowa hospitals.*

Iowa's largest private insurance company, Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield, has also been influential in moving quality indicators. Essentially, Wellmark has promoted a greater relationship between patients and physicians, along with providing financial rewards for physicians who provide excellent diabetes care and share the information. Wellmark also sponsors "Collaborating for Innovative Care," which promotes the development of new processes and techniques to treat diabetes.