

In the Commonwealth Fund's *State Scorecard on Health System Performance, 2009*, no state performed better than Vermont. The state has spent a significant amount of public funds to help improve quality and cost-effectiveness. Through careful planning and a series of progressive reforms, Vermont managed to change its healthcare system into one of the best in the country.

The central part of Vermont's healthcare plan is their 'Blueprint for Health,' a plan to create, "a statewide system of care to improve the lives of individuals with, and at risk for, chronic conditions." This program entails providing patients with support to make healthier choices, giving providers tools and incentives to, "ensure treatment consistent with evidence-based standards of care," supporting communities with programs to combat chronic diseases, assist providers with technological developments, and develop common performance measures. Many of these activities are designed and scaled to meet the needs of individual communities (taking the population and need of such into account).

One of the key developments in the early stages of Blueprint for Health was the reform of payments. Commercial insurers, Vermont Medicaid, and Medicare (with Blueprint subsidies) to provide, "1) enhanced reimbursement on top of negotiated rates to providers that meet certain medical home standards, and 2) direct financial support for local multidisciplinary Community Care Teams to support system integration and planning." These Community Care Teams helped to bridge the gap between local communities and governing bodies, making them more responsive to the communities' individual needs.

Vermont also has plans to move to electronic medical records. In 2008, the state established a Health Technology Fund, along with the Vermont Information Technology Leaders (VITL) to oversee and aid with this transition. Also, in 2008, DocSite was selected to provide a Web-based clinical tracking system utilizing the health information from VITL. With this data, healthcare practitioners are able to administer better and more efficient care to their patients. In addition, officials hope that the health information exchange will be able to collect and share information that is relevant for individuals at the point of care that is used to track risk factors across populations.

With a great deal of foresight, Vermont has focused a great deal on preventative care. The Blueprint for Health's focus on this is expected to reduce the overall demand for high-cost treatments later, while reducing the growth rate in health care costs throughout the system. In addition:

*The Blueprint also has reinvigorated traditional public health activities. The state sponsors Healthier Living Workshops that target people with arthritis, asthma, heart disease, chronic pain, and other chronic conditions. The Fit & healthy Vermonters Initiative focuses on preventing obesity by encouraging physical activity and healthier eating in schools, worksites, early childcare sites, and other settings. And the Department of Health is implementing a process to enable the provision of*

*clinically recommended immunizations to all residents across the lifespan at no cost when not otherwise reimbursed.*

Another key is Vermont's commitment to transparency, which they hope can be used to identify inefficiencies in their healthcare system. For example, hospital community reports, with a myriad of information regarding quality and other characteristics of the individual hospitals, are published online for patients to see. Vermont is also creating a Vermont Healthcare Claims Uniform Reporting System, a database collecting claims from all private and public insurance plans to better understand the effectiveness and efficient of the healthcare delivery system.