

The Process of Partnership Development Between a Colorado Accountable Care Collaborative and a Behavioral Health Provider

The Partners

Rocky Mountain Health Plan, a Regional Care Collaborative Organization and Mind Springs Health, a Community Mental Health Center

The Opportunity

A growing trend in health care is cross-sector partnerships that allow organizations to expand capacity and advance population health. HMA Community Strategies (HMACS) is often asked about the “how to” of partnership development as more and more organizations think about collaborating with new sectors in order to meet the new vision of health. HMACS decided to showcase a national example of collaboration that is grounded in principles of partnership development that are both evidence based and effective. HMACS has observed these two Colorado based partners and believes their story has valuable lessons for leaders across the country.

The Approach

This case study explores the process used by two partners who saw the changing environment as an opportunity for dramatic improvement in system delivery to enhance community and population health. HMACS culls the “real life” lessons and explores the process two leaders engaged in to develop a strong partnership in order to meet a shared model of care and extend their collective impact. HMACS leveraged literature and best practice on cross-sector collaboration and partnership development to connect “theory to practice.” HMACS provides a framework for conceptualizing the critical steps that the organizations took to develop a strong partnership that was effective in meeting shared goals and outcomes for the population. The primary sources for the investigation were interviews with Sharon Raggio, CEO of Mind Spring Health, and Patrick Gordon, Associate Vice President of Rocky Mountain Health Plan, as well as a review of presentations and written materials produced by the partners.

The Results

The [case study](#) looks at the partnership at various phases of development using an evidence based framework (Bryson, J.M., Crosby, B.C., & Middleton Stone, M., (2006). The Design and Implementation of Cross-Sector Collaborations: Propositions from the Literature, *Public Administration Review* Special Issue, 44-55.)

- The early work in relationship building between the partners leading up to the partnership formation and the role of the environment of health care reform in shaping the partnership.
- The model design and strategy chosen by the partners and the role of structure and governance decisions required to formalize the partnership.
- The specific kind of leadership demonstrated by each organization and how leadership style supported the success of the process for partnership development.
- The implementation and maintenance of the shared model and partnership including outcome development and roles in accountability.

The partnership between Mind Springs Health and Rocky Mountain Health Plan exemplifies the role of cross-sector collaboration embedded within the transition from individual providers to larger networks of health care systems. Models such as Accountable Care Organizations or Accountable Care Collaboratives will be effective only if the participants seeking to form partnerships are fully committed to developing a more coordinated service for the population being served. This case study highlights the foundation of these important grass roots efforts and how partners can engage in relationships that are effective and built to last. HMACS believes that the framework can be a valuable tool for organizations developing collaborative partnerships. We look forward to discussion and targeted support of early partners to ensure collaborations are “built to last.” We know partnerships are a vital foundation for effective population health management and we can support those efforts from the ground up.

Click [here](#) to access the complete case study.

HMA Contact(s): Gina Lasky, PhD
Senior Consultant, Health Management Associates
glasky@healthmanagement.com
(720) 638-6712