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Provider Groups Receive Innovation Award from Medica

MINNETONKA, Minn. – Medica today announced the first-ever recipients of its “Raising the Bar” Innovation Awards. The winners are: Access Psychiatric Home Health, SMDC, Western Wisconsin Medical Associates and WestHealth.

Medica created the “Raising the Bar” Innovation Awards in 2008 to recognize the work of provider groups — from single-site practices to healthcare systems — that are implementing unique changes that improve patient care and have proven results, through measures of clinical outcomes or effectiveness. The awards will be presented annually to providers in Medica’s service area who demonstrate how they are leading the way in improving quality of care and setting up systems and processes to sustain it.

The “Raising the Bar” Innovation Awards were received for the following programs:

Access Psychiatric Home Health, Grand Rapids, Minn., for a program that involves home care nurses providing follow-up home care to patients with serious, persistent mental illness. These patients are in need of frequent checkups and care due to such mental conditions as bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia and depression and are at high risk for going off their medications. Access psychiatric nurses provide the in-home follow-up care necessary to sustain drug compliance by these patients. In a two-year period from 2006 to 2008, Access was able to reduce acute care hospitalization by 13.2 percent; during 2007 alone, this agency improved medication management by 16.5 percent.

SMDC, Duluth, for a comprehensive outreach program for Medicaid-covered well-child care. Initially, six SMDC clinics in Minnesota and Wisconsin took part in the initiative with a goal of improving upon the mere 57 percent of children who were up to date for such exams. All 14 clinic locations were then included starting in 2007. Ongoing outreach methods include patient letters to the child’s parent, follow-up phone calls, and then reminder postcards. In the initial six clinics, the 80 percent goal was exceeded across all child age groups up to 20 years of age. These clinics moved their well-child exam numbers by a minimum of 40 percent in a year and a half. For all 14 SMDC clinics in phase 2, started in 2007, the percentage of children seen for a well-child checkup exceeds 80 percent for one age group.

Western Wisconsin Medical Associates for a program that makes patient visits more efficient, comprehensive and more customized for the patient. Starting in 2005, WWMA implemented a new treatment approach whereby office visits are combined for both chronic and preventive care needs. Based on clinical guidelines, the result is that additional tests, exams and immunizations are offered during all patient visits. This allows the clinics to use a single process focused on any chronic illness and all appropriate preventive services for a given patient. The process is followed in all five WWMA clinics: Ellsworth Medical Clinic, Hudson Physicians, New Richmond Clinic, River Falls Medical Clinic and Spring Valley Medical Clinic.

WestHealth for a quality improvement process implemented in 2006 for all of its staff members. The center, which typically doesn’t encounter patients for more than a single visit, designed Score Card measures around service issues using National Patient Safety goals. Employees took a stake in determining their own goals through a “wish list” process to define how they could be judged for quality.

Measures included everything from cycle times to wait times to patient ID compliance to safety incidents to patient satisfaction. According to the most recent measurement data, taken in the spring of 2008, satisfaction scores increased by 8.2 percent to 96 percent overall satisfaction.

“Medica is very pleased to recognize these providers with “Raising the Bar” Innovation Awards, for seeing a healthcare delivery need and addressing the challenge head on,” said Dr. Jim Guyn, Medica’s medical director for provider relations. “Each one of them identified a unique healthcare delivery need and addressed the challenge head on. Not only are they improving the healthcare experience of their patients, they also are demonstrating leadership within the broader provider community by showing that changes can be made to improve clinical outcomes.”

In addition to the four award winners, four groups were named as finalists but did not receive awards – Allina Medical Clinic, Cedar Riverside People’s Center, Marshfield Clinic and St. Paul Heart Clinic.

About Medica

Medica is a health insurance company headquartered in Minneapolis and active in the Upper Midwest. With nearly 1.4 million members, the non-profit company provides health care coverage in the employer, individual, Medicaid, Medicare and Medicare Part D markets in Minnesota and a growing number of counties in North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. Medica also offers national network coverage to employers who also have employees outside the Medica regional network.

Medica has the highest accreditation status, Excellent, from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA®) for its Minnesota Medicaid HMO plans and commercial health plans in Minnesota and North Dakota. Medica’s vision is to become the community’s health plan of choice, trusted for its integrity, respected for its service, and admired for its commitment to innovation and efficiency.

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