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Empowering Community Partners with High-Impact Programs

Community Partners, also recognized as CBOs (Community-Based Organizations), play a pivotal role in communities. However, they have been historically sidelined from the current healthcare ecosystem. A new era is dawning, and the realization is spreading that it's crucial for the healthcare ecosystem and CBOs to get deeply connected to best serve their patients/clients and communities, and sustain their operations.

Historical Hurdles

Traditional barriers have hindered CBO engagement in the ecosystem. Some of these challenges include limited payment avenues for SDoH (Social Drivers of Health) services, ability to share data securely and in real time, and inadequate technology tools.

Rising Trend: Smart Solutions for Identified Needs

A growing number of organizations recognize the necessity of digital transformation to meet needs and make a tangible impact. Yet, they encounter obstacles that require efficient resolutions. And while achieving this goal has traditionally proven more challenging than anticipated, it is feasible now more than ever.

Organizations across different segments—metropolitan, single-county, multi-county, and state—are proactively seeking avenues to enhance their services' efficacy. Essential aspects of their desired resolution encompass seamless staff collaboration in data collection, centralizing data storage and analysis. From there, organizations must be able to use this information to support everything from individual care coordination to program operations and generating reports.

Examples of Innovative Pending Implementations

Entities across the spectrum are presently pursuing technology solutions. Some examples include:

- Kern Health System, California: created a request for proposals for a technology platform to help address the new California Medicaid social requirements

- PA RISE: Pennsylvania released a request for proposals for a statewide web-based resource and referral tool for SDoH

- Medicaid Management Solutions: posted a request for proposals around a technology solution for Northeast Florida to create a community care hub

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A Case Study: Highmark Health

Highmark Health, the second-largest integrated delivery and financing system in the US, collaborated with Allegheny Health Network (AHN) to transcend barriers and enhance CBO engagement. In 2022, they initiated a multi-year project to establish a dynamic social care network—a strategic move with significant potential.

Focusing on Social Drivers of Health (SDoHs)

Highmark's network centers on compensating non-profits through a Value Based Care (VBC) arrangement, addressing SDoHs like food insecurity, transportation, and housing. This approach fosters enhanced access, participant coordination, broader patient insights, community integration for MCOs/health systems, and financial diversification for CBO partners.

Elevating CBOs within a Unified Ecosystem

For successful social networks, CBOs—experts in SDoH—require operational and data parity. Highmark followed a tailored approach to finding a solution that accounted for CBO-specific operational and financial constraints. In the first year alone, more than 20 non-profits in Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties joined the Highmark program, clearly demonstrating the demand for a well-designed and buttoned-up solution.

Seeking to Embrace Available Solutions

CBOs face a technological divide and lack a unified information source. Seeking to embrace a foundational, customized program tailored to their distinct needs is vital. Highmark Health and AHN's initiative exemplifies their commitment to reshaping MCO-CBO relationships, enhancing health outcomes, reducing disparities, promoting equity, and curbing costs by meeting participants where they are. It also demonstrates their recognition of the need for such a solution.

Choosing a Unified Path Forward

With foresight, health and community partners are actively pursuing a singular platform, poised to replace the arduous chore of managing data scattered among divergent systems—ranging from antiquated paper trails to labyrinthine spreadsheets and disjointed software suites. This transformation holds the key to not only refining operational efficiency but also to unleashing their full potential in serving vulnerable populations.

The resounding imperative is clear: the moment has arrived to embrace intuitive transformation. Now is the time to incorporate solutions that empower CBOs to integrate seamlessly within the healthcare ecosystem and proficiently oversee operations at every level.