

## Accountable Care Organizations: What are they?

Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) are groups of doctors, hospitals, and other health care providers who work together to increase and improve coordinated care for people with Medicare. If these groups succeed in giving high quality care and show savings over original, or “fee for service,” Medicare, they can share in the savings.

To form an ACO, a group of providers must show they can create an effective primary care team for beneficiaries. People with original Medicare are matched up with or assigned to an ACO if they receive most of their care from ACO providers. Data from these beneficiaries is used to track health outcomes and measure savings. However, these patients can still see the providers of their choice—they are not required to see ACO providers.

It’s the health care providers, not people with Medicare, who are participating in ACOs. People with Medicare don’t sign up for or select an ACO. ACOs are provider groups—they are not membership-based beneficiary groups, health maintenance organizations (HMOs), or managed care entities.

There are several ways people with Medicare will find out if their doctor is participating in an ACO, such as in-person at their doctor’s office or by letters from their doctor. As one of the ACO’s goals is to better coordinate care, a provider participating in an ACO may ask his/her patients to allow Medicare to share certain health information with the ACO. Patients can refuse to share their health information with the ACO in writing or by calling 1-800-MEDICARE.

People with Medicare who get services from doctors participating in an ACO may see changes at the doctor’s office. Their doctor may give them more information about their care. They may notice more follow-up from nurses after visits. They may be asked to create a care plan with their doctor. They may also see increased attention to preventive care, discharge planning, and care transitions.

Medicare has several initiatives and programs that support healthcare participation in ACOs, including:

- The [Pioneer ACO Model](#), for organizations with experience operating as ACOs offering high quality coordinated care.
- The [Medicare Shared Savings Program](#), which gives providers several opportunities to engage with CMS as an ACO. CMS approved 27 applicants to begin participating in ACOs in April 2012. More ACOs will begin participating in July 2012, January 2013 and then annually.

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## Current Pioneer ACOs in Wisconsin

### Allina Hospitals & Clinics

Allina Hospitals & Clinics is a not-for-profit system of hospitals, clinics and health care services, providing care throughout Minnesota and western Wisconsin. Allina owns and operates 11 hospitals, more than 90 clinics and specialty care centers, and specialty medical services that provide hospice care, oxygen and home medical equipment, pharmacies, and emergency medical transportation services.

Organizations affiliated with Allina include: Hospitals: Abbott Northwestern Hospital, Buffalo Hospital, Cambridge Medical Center, Mercy Hospital, New Ulm Medical Center, Owatonna Hospital, Phillips Eye Institute, River Falls Area Hospital, St. Francis Regional Medical Center (jointly owned), United Hospital, Unity Hospital. Ambulatory care centers: Abbott Northwestern's Center for Outpatient Care, Edina, Elk Ridge Health, WestHealth Campus and Woodbury Ambulatory Surgery Center (jointly owned) Clinic groups (multiple locations): Allina Medical Clinic, Aspen Medical Group, Quello Clinic. Multiple hospital-based clinics.

### Bellin-ThedaCare Healthcare Partners

Bellin – ThedaCare Healthcare Partners is an organization of providers covering 12 counties in Northeast Wisconsin. Two leading healthcare systems; Bellin Health, based in Green Bay and ThedaCare, based in Appleton, as well as eight major health care facilities, and nearly 700 physicians make up the network.

Originally named the Northeast Wisconsin Health Value Network, Bellin – ThedaCare Healthcare Partners was formed in 2008 to create value through quality improvement, efficiency of care and an approach to care that emphasizes life-long health. Those participating in the network coordinate patient care and maintain a centralized electronic medical record. Through coordination, information sharing and following a program of continuous incremental improvement, Bellin-ThedaCare enables healthcare providers to achieve desired clinical outcomes in a cost effective manner, achieve greater overall health for our patients and foster a positive relationship with employers and purchasers. For the benefit of purchasers, patients and physicians, Bellin-ThedaCare issues regular report cards that track actual performance based on a strict set of criteria. This report card ensures ongoing quality improvement.

## Current Medicare Shared Savings Programs in Wisconsin

### Accountable Care Coalition of Southeast Wisconsin, LLC.

The Accountable Care Coalition of Southeast Wisconsin, LLC is an ACO partnership between Independent Physician Network, Inc. (IPN) and Collaborative Health Systems. IPN was established in 1984 and has grown to include more than 900 physicians who serve more than 130,000 patients in southeastern Wisconsin. The ACO is expected to serve nearly 10,000 beneficiaries.

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