



States Advancing All-Payer Health Equity Approaches and Development (AHEAD) Model: Role of State Advocates

[Research shows](#) that people desire targeted improvements to the health care system, favoring a system which better prioritizes and centers their needs by moving away from a fragmented, fee-for-service model that incentivizes quantity over quality. When designed correctly, patient-first care models can elevate the patient voice in health care decision making alongside the voices of providers, payers, and other stakeholders in reducing disparities, promoting accountability, and creating a health care system that prioritizes affordable, comprehensive, and understandable care, regardless of patients' background or health status. The States Advancing All-Payer Health Equity Approaches and Development Model, known as the AHEAD Model, provides an opportunity for state advocates to be involved in thinking about how to do that.

Important of Advocates in Patient First Care Approaches

State advocates play an instrumental role in elevating the voices of patients within their communities, ensuring that people's needs are reflected in policy decisions. Advocates are uniquely positioned to leverage their expertise in translating the needs of real people into policy action, bridging the gap between what people desire from the health care system and the benefits of patient first care models, like the AHEAD Model. State advocates remain crucial in securing the best outcomes for residents, through things such as:

- Engaging with and uplifting the needs of underserved communities;
- Gathering and amplifying community feedback to inform policy solutions;
- Fostering partnerships with and between community organizations, state agencies, and provider groups; and
- Helping to enhance provider recruitment into the Model.

How Can Advocates Support the AHEAD Model?



States: Engage with interested states to encourage participation and provide input on design of Medicaid primary care APMs and HCBs.



CMS: Provide feedback on the Model and ways that CMS can best serve prospective State and provider participants.



Commercial Payers: Assess ability to align with key components of the Model; encourage participation in HGBs and PCA-aligned programs.



Hospitals: Engage with hospitals in interested states to support Model education and recruitment efforts, including about HGBs, how to build relationships with the primary care community, and approaches to investment in care coordination infrastructure.



Primary Care Practices: Engage with practices in interested states to support Model education and recruitment efforts, including PCMH participation, and how EPCP funds can support building advanced primary care infrastructure and reaching populations most in need.

Source: [CMS Presentation](#) on USofCare Webinar "[What State Advocates Should Know: CMS' New AHEAD Model Part 2](#)" on

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During the Application Period

As states consider their interest in participating in the AHEAD Model, state advocates have a critical role to play in supporting their state agencies in considering how to implement what system reforms and associated infrastructure already exists that states could leverage to implement the Model's components. Advocates can help to offer the patient perspective to regulators, identifying where pain points in the system currently exist and how AHEAD Model components, like hospital global budgets and Medicaid primary care alternative payment models, may offer solutions to these challenges. Further, advocates should highlight the meaningful benefits of participating in the AHEAD Model on health care access, affordability, and equity with key stakeholders.

During Model Implementation

During implementation, advocates will once again be essential to ensuring the best outcomes for state residents. Participating state agencies are likely to use both policy and regulatory solutions to promote payer alignment and contain health care spending growth. States will be offered [flexibility](#) in how they implement these strategies and measure success of the Model, however CMS requires participating states to develop targets, metrics and report results of each area of the Model. This flexibility offers advocates the opportunity to weigh in on the most effective levers for states to implement to advance the AHEAD Model's goals of containing health care costs, improving population health outcomes, and advancing health equity.

Advocates have an important role to play in the AHEAD Model, bridging gaps between stakeholders and amplifying the needs of people to advance health care payment and deliver reforms in a way that centers the patient experience. Through these efforts, advocates, regulators, legislators and providers can advance meaningful solutions to improve health care quality, access and affordability