



VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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Addressing the Social Determinants of Health

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Bob Whitler is Executive Director of the Partners in Health Network, Inc. (PIHN), a collaborative network of health care organizations designed to improve health services delivery and the health status of the population while assuring access to essential health services in rural communities. He is also Vice President for Government and Community Affairs at Charleston Area Medical Center (CAMC). He has been with both PIHN and CAMC for 16 years.

Prior to these positions, Whitler provided health care consulting services to a wide range of rural health care providers, including small and rural hospitals, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and rural health networks. He was also Vice President for Public Policy with the West Virginia Hospital Association, where he established its first small and rural hospital committee.

He was a Peace Corps volunteer in Senegal, working in rural development water well construction, and an Associate Peace Corps Director for Health and Rural Development in Sierra Leone.

Whitler serves on the boards of West Virginia Health Right, the West Virginia Board of Osteopathic Medicine, The Center for Rural Health, The West Virginia Rural Health Association and the Logan Health Care Foundation.

It has been my great honor to represent and work for both Charleston Area Medical Center (CAMC) and the Partners in Health Network, Inc. (PIHN) over the past 16 years. PIHN, in particular, has provided me the opportunity to continue working with our rural safety net providers. PIHN, which was incorporated in 1995, is the oldest and largest rural health care network in West Virginia. It is comprised of 37 members covering a 26-county area in central and southern West Virginia.

Besides CAMC, members of the network include acute care community hospitals, critical access hospitals, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), a psychiatric hospital, two community mental health centers, a large free clinic, a women's health center, a city-county health department and EMS land/air providers. Voting members, with one exception, are community-based, not-for-profit institutions. Associate members include a private primary care practice, a long-term care facility and a quality institute.

PIHN is unique among most rural networks across the country in that we have a wide range of health care providers collaborating to improve the health care of the communities we serve. Partner members have collaborated during the past 20 years on a number of programs to improve access and quality. The board meets once a month to provide direction, and I am always amazed and humbled by the dedication of our members and the quality of discussion.

PIHN board members are both proactive and progressive. They have implemented a wide range of quality health care programs, including:

- An initiative to provide access to health care to the working uninsured through the Community Access Program



- A nationally accredited Credentialing Verification Organization
- Enhanced care management for high utilizers of hospital emergency departments
- Clinical outreach to Critical Access Hospitals
- Chronic care management for Medicare recipients
- A nine-year program with Aetna Better Care to provide enhanced care management to managed care Medicaid recipients
- Enrolling patients who qualified for coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ACA)
- Telehealth, in partnership with CAMC

Social Determinants of Health

Although pleased with the progress over the years, the PIHN board has approved a new initiative to address social determinants of health, recognizing that even if access to quality care is available, social determinants often prevent individuals from accessing appropriate care or improving their health status. To that end, PIHN is honored to have been chosen by key stakeholders in the state to be the "bridge organization" for an Accountable Health Community (AHC) five-year award from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation at the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The stakeholders include:

- CAMC Health Education and Research Institute (CHERI)
- Department of Health and Human Resources – Bureau for Medical Services
- West Virginia University (WVU) Institute for Community and Rural Health
- West Virginia Center for Excellence in Disabilities
- West Virginia Family Resource Center
- Quality Insights
- Try This West Virginia
- The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation

The overarching goal of the award is to bridge the divide between clinical delivery systems and community service providers


to address health-related social needs, improve beneficiary well-being and reduce the overall cost of health care. We will offer to screen over 75,000 Medicare/Medicaid recipients by the end of year two.

About 70 percent of Medicare or Medicaid beneficiaries with two or more emergency department visits in a 12-month period, and of at least one social determinant, will be randomly selected to receive enhanced navigational services by the West Virginia Center for Excellence in Disabilities. Social determinants to be screened include housing access and stability, utilities assistance, food insecurity, interpersonal violence and transportation needs. CAPGate (a secure web-based registry) will be used to track progress towards meeting beneficiaries' social needs.

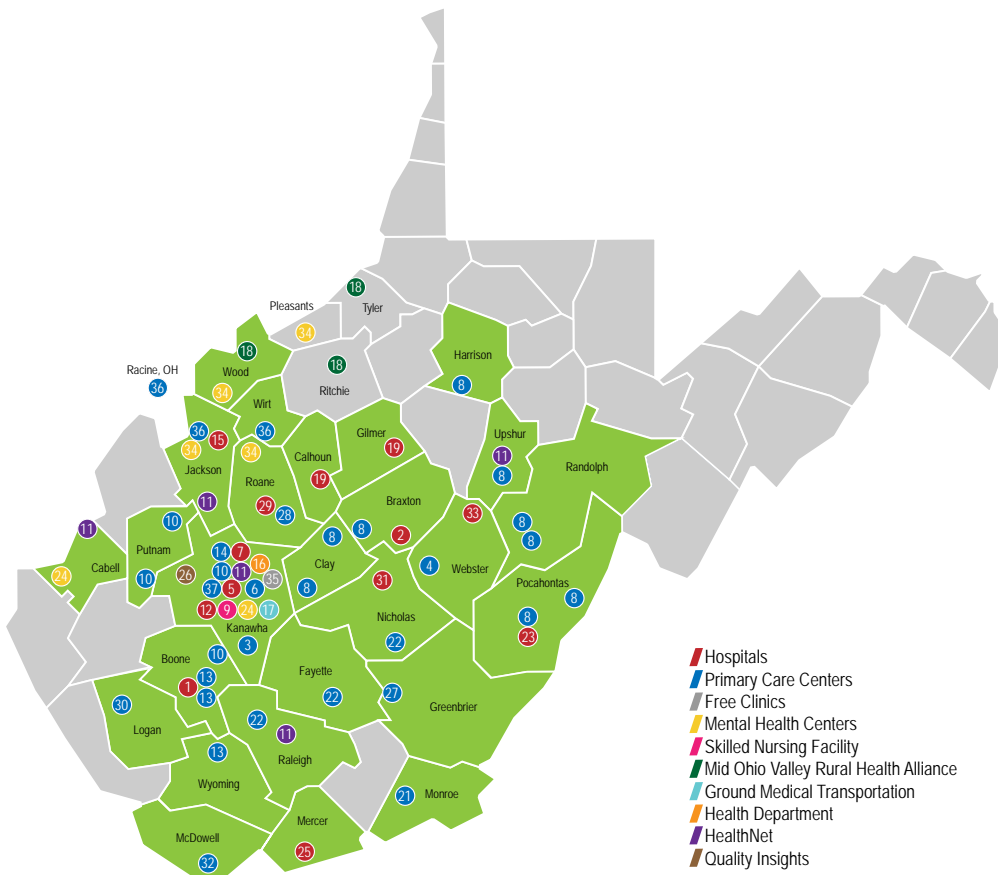
There are nine health care organizations with 48 delivery sites involved in this five-

year effort to improve the health care of our most vulnerable citizens:

1. CAMC
2. Community Care of West Virginia
3. Highland Hospital
4. Jackson General Hospital
5. Minnie Hamilton Health System
6. Pretera Center
7. Summersville Regional Medical Center
8. West Virginia Health Right
9. WVU Hospitals / WVU Medical Corporation

PIHN looks forward to working with the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation, our key stakeholders and the participating clinical organizations on addressing social determinants in West Virginia. Our challenge is both exciting and daunting at the same time. 

Partners in Health Network, Inc.



- 1) Boone Memorial Hospital
- 2) Braxton County Memorial Hospital
- 3) Cabin Creek Health Systems
- 4) Camden-On-Gauley Medical Center
- 5) Charleston Area Medical Center Includes General, Memorial & Women and Children's Hospitals
- 6) Charleston Internal Medicine Inc.
- 7) Charleston Surgical Hospital
- 8) Community Care of WV
- 9) Eastbrook Center, LLC
- 10) FamilyCare Health Center
- 11) HealthNet Aeromedical Services
- 12) Highland Hospital
- 13) Hygeia Facilities Foundation
- 14) Integrated Health Care Providers, Inc.
- 15) Jackson General Hospital
- 16) Kanawha Charleston Health Department
- 17) Kanawha County Emergency Ambulance Authority
- 18) Mid-Ohio Valley Rural Health Alliance
- 19) Minnie Hamilton Health System
- 20) Montgomery General Hospital
- 21) Monroe County Health Center
- 22) New River Health Association
- 23) Pocahontas Memorial Hospital
- 24) Pretera Center for Mental Health
- 25) Princeton Community Hospital
- 26) Quality Insights
- 27) Rainelle Medical Center
- 28) Roane Family Practice
- 29) Roane General Hospital
- 30) Rural Health Access Corporation DBA: Coalfield Health Center
- 31) Summersville Regional Medical Center
- 32) Tug River Health Association
- 33) Webster County Memorial Hospital
- 34) Westbrook Health Services
- 35) West Virginia Health Right
- 36) Wirt County Health Services Association
- 37) Women's Health Center of WV