



STEPPING STONES

Bridging Healthcare Gaps

The new Care Transitions Project of Whatcom County is aimed at eliminating unnecessary readmissions to St. Joseph Hospital. Studies across the country have demonstrated that there are potential gaps in communication and coordination when patients transition from one setting or aspect of care to another resulting in patient risk and increased costs. The aim of this project is to bridge those gaps and enable safer and more effective transitions.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has contracted with Qualis Health (Washington's quality improvement organization) to engage community partners including healthcare providers, patients, and families, in the Care Transitions Project through 2011.

GOALS

The goals of the project are to:

- Connect providers throughout the healthcare system in Whatcom County to enable safe and effective transition of patients.
- Eliminate unnecessary hospital readmissions to St. Joseph Hospital.
- Enable Whatcom County patients and their families to participate fully in their health and healthcare, particularly when leaving the hospital.

STRATEGIES

To accomplish the goals, the participating partners in the project will:

- Engage healthcare providers to ensure optimal coordination, communication and information exchange around the needs of each patient and family, particularly when patients are leaving the hospital. Activities include identifying patients at highest risk, using the CMS CARE tool, and implementing the teach-back technique.
- Implement use of care transition coaches and coaching protocols to help patients self-manage their care.
- Expand use of Shared Care Plan Personal Health Record among Whatcom County residents.
- Activate strategic partnerships that engage key healthcare, business, nonprofit, and government entities within the community in the Care Transitions Project.

PROJECT ORGANIZATIONAL SPONSORS

The organizations that are inviting others to participate are:

St. Joseph Hospital, a 253-bed medical center in Bellingham, WA.

www.peacehealth.org/whatcom/NW_vital_stats.htm

Contact: Kathy Hager, 360.738.6300, ext. 2516, khager@peacehealth.org.

Critical Junctions Institute, a research institute jointly sponsored by St. Joseph Hospital and Western Washington University focused on studying social networks and healthcare in Whatcom County.

Contact: Alan Friedlob, Acting Director, 360.650.4995, ext. 107, alan.friedlob@wwu.edu.

Qualis Health, the quality improvement organization for Idaho and Washington.

www.qualishealthmedicare.org

Contact: Selena Bolotin, 206.364.9700, ext. 2342, selenab@qualishealth.org.

Northwest Regional Council, an association of county governments that implements state and federal programs for seniors and people who need long-term care.

www.nwrcwa.org

Contact: Victoria Doerper, 360.676.6749, doerpva@dshs.wa.gov

