

August 7th, 2024

Dear Members of the Joint Task Force on Hospital Discharge Challenges,

As a community-based organization serving Oregonians in need, Project Access NOW (PANOW) is acutely aware of the challenges facing our health system in the hospital discharge space. PANOW acts in partnership with hospital systems across the state such as Providence Health & Services and Kaiser Permanente as a coordinator of health-related social resources for patients leaving hospital settings. This program guarantees a safer, more secure, and more timely and efficient discharge for patients and frees hospital staff from the burden of administrative work like tracking down the correct resource, billing, or tax documentation for social services. Patients are discharged faster with more efficient access to resources, preventing unnecessary readmissions, reducing hospital crowding, and improving patient and hospital staff experience. Since 2015, **PANOW has coordinated the delivery of over \$40 million in social support services** such as transportation, food assistance, and temporary housing to over 80,000 individuals in need. As the task force continues to develop guidance on hospital discharge challenges, **we encourage consideration of a model that outsources the challenging administrative work of coordinating these services to a community-based entity, easing hospital discharge challenges and establishing a centralized coordinating entity for social resources.**

PANOW's vision for the future of Oregon is a more coordinated approach to health and social services, and we believe that a model that centralizes the coordination of those services is integral to that vision. Without such a model, the wrong funding streams are often used, data collection and screenings are duplicated, and care is siloed and less efficient. We encourage a model of coordination based on the following pillars:

1. **Workforce:** It's no secret that hospitals across Oregon are dealing with significant workforce shortages. Outsourcing administrative work increases capacity for hospital staff, eases workforce issues, and allows staff to focus on what they do best: patient care.
2. **Consolidation of Resource Network:** Patients discharging from the hospital need access to resources that often are provided by small businesses and community organizations. Maintaining a network of these resources is a burdensome task. Outsourcing this function to another community-based entity means that each hospital does not need to maintain such a network for themselves, and can plug into an existing, well-maintained network that is much broader than what one entity can accomplish on their own.

3. **Community Information Exchange:** Data collection and sharing are an integral piece of this model. Our health system needs meaningful data and centralizing this work will allow for that data to be gathered and analyzed in an efficient manner.
4. **Closed Loop Referrals:** Ensuring every entity involved in the delivery of services receives the necessary information and updates is critical to this work. Hospitals often don't receive these updates to confirm that a service they referred an individual for has been completed. Creating a model that guarantees a closed loop referral will greatly reduce the time hospital staff spend attempting to confirm the status of a referral.
5. **Funding Source:** Without a centralized model for providing social resources, the wrong funding stream is often identified for a needed service. Ensuring that the correct payor for each resource is used increases efficiency and equity in our broader system.

As Oregon moves closer to its goal of eliminating health inequities by 2030, we encourage the task force to consider a solution for hospital discharge challenges that incorporates a centralized system to coordinate social services and how such a system could improve continuity of care and the discharge process in our state's hospitals.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on this issue and look forward to the critical work to come. If there is any way PANOW can support the work of the task force, please don't hesitate to reach out to us with any questions or inquiries.

Thank you,

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