

HCCN Objective Spotlight

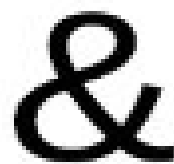
The Health Center Controlled Network (HCCN) is excited to share insights on the progress and strategies of our Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) in advancing patient engagement through digital health tools.

As part of this effort, the HCCN aims to increase the percentage of FQHCs that support patients' and families' participation in their health care through the expanded use of integrated digital health tools. This includes sending electronic messages to providers and care teams through the patient portal, leveraging telehealth visits, or using remote monitoring devices that digitally report results back to the clinic.

Many health centers are making significant strides by optimizing patient portals, expanding bidirectional text messaging with patients, and implementing remote patient monitoring programs.

Two standout health centers, North Side Christian Health Center and The Primary Health Network, have made remarkable progress. Both report that over 90% of their patients actively engage with digital health tools between medical visits since the start of this project period in August 2022.

Read on to discover the innovative strategies that helped them achieve these results!



Health Center Details

North Side Christian Health Center

Location: Pittsburgh, PA
Patient Count: 3,982
EHR: eClnicalWorks
Other Digital Health Tools:
Healow portal and SMBP

Primary Health Network

Location: Sharon, PA
Patient Count: 75,278
EHR: athenaPractice
Other Digital Health Tools:
Intelichart portal

Contact Information

North Side Christian Health Center

Name: Carilynn Coulter
Role: Chief Operations Officer
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For more information about North Side Christian Health Center and the services they offer, visit their [website](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

Primary Health Network

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For more information about Primary Health Network and the services they offer, visit their [website](#) or call 1- 866-276-7018.

Measure Performance Highlight

North Side Christian Health Center

Reporting 91% of their patients are engaging digitally between visits!

Primary Health Network

Reporting a 65% increase in digital patient engagement since 2021!

The “Why”

North Side Christian Health Center

“Patient Engagement is strengthening our quality improvement program. Only by diversifying our methods for engaging patients will we yield greater improvements. **When patients are engaged in their own healthcare, they get the care they need to be their healthiest, reduce the possibility of medical errors, and improve the relationship between the healthcare provider and the patient.**”

Primary Health Network

“We recognize the critical importance of connecting patients to digital healthcare solutions. As healthcare continues to evolve, staying up to date with emerging technologies and digital tools is essential to improving patient care. **Our commitment to integrating these advancements ensures that we provide our patients with more efficient, accessible, and personalized healthcare experiences.** By leveraging the latest in telemedicine, health apps, and electronic health records, we aim to enhance patient engagement, streamline care coordination, and ultimately achieve better health outcomes.”

Key Strategies

North Side Christian Health Center

Key Takeaway: Tackle one piece at a time and assign a champion, if possible.

“One of the patient engagement initiatives was for medication refill requests, we set a goal to bring the number of refill request phone calls to zero (0), having patients request a refill either through the portal or through a pharmacy-initiated refill request. We eliminated the option of calling for refills in the phone system so that patients are nudged to use the portal to engage the office for refills. Our medical director chose to be the change champion with help from Clinical Nurses.”

Primary Health Network

Key Takeaway: Demonstrate the value-add for your staff and your patients.

“We've always had a strong focus on digital solutions, but a few years ago, we decided to invest in a new patient portal to add even more value for our employees and patients. We needed to demonstrate to our staff that implementing this new system would save them time and effort. By encouraging patients to sign up for the portal, we not only enhance the patient experience but also benefit our office staff. With patients able to access their healthcare information, request medication refills, obtain lab results, and communicate with providers online, our staff can focus more on in-office care rather than managing phone inquiries.”

Staff Participation/Engagement

North Side Christian Health Center

Key Takeaway: Trial run your technology with staff before deploying to identify potential challenges.

- Educate staff about the importance of shifting some of the responsibility of patient care to the patient receiving the care.
- Front office staff trained on the portal through eCW University.
- During the registration process, front office staff explains the portal benefits to every new patient and enrolls them. If they decline, they can change their mind and enroll at another time.
- It was particularly useful to ‘test run’ signing up for the portal with a staff member to see the common pitfalls and hangups that staff would need to help with.

Primary Health Network

Key Takeaway: Involve frontline staff in your rollout.

- Involving frontline staff in all digital technology rollouts is crucial to their success. By including them in the development process and rollout plan, we empower them to provide input and make decisions that best support the office. When staff are involved in development, they feel more connected to the tool, leading to a smoother implementation.
- We always pilot a project at one or two offices before a network-wide rollout, allowing us to make quick adjustments and ensure the implementation goes as smoothly as possible.
- We have dedicated application trainers who support most digital healthcare tools. We develop learning modules that staff can attend, watch, or read whenever a new project begins or new features are introduced. Staff can also request retraining anytime if unsure about the software or simply want a refresher.

Materials/Advertising

North Side Christian Health Center

Key Takeaway: Trial run your Key Takeaway: Keep it simple. Create materials that are easy to read and in a patient's native language, and make accessing and understanding your tools as easy as possible.

- Verbal education about the portal is provided to the patients by front office staff in person and over the phone. The pharmacist also provides verbal education about SMBP to patients.
- We guided our portal messaging using patient feedback.
- We designed a portal enrollment flier that introduced this functionality to the patient. We added QR codes created from a free QR code generator to the sheet so patients could easily scan them with their smartphones to sign up.
- We translated the form into Spanish, but other languages were more challenging to translate.

Primary Health Network

Key Takeaway: Make support and TA available to patients.

- For some digital rollouts, we designated staff members at offices to assist patients with enrollment. For instance, when we implemented our new check-in solution, trainers were on-site to guide patients through the intake process if they needed assistance. In another example, for patients connecting to their first telehealth visit, we sent an instructional email with a step-by-step video and followed up with phone calls to walk them through the process if they encountered any difficulties.

Summary/Conclusion

North Side Christian Health Center

Our plan is to continue promoting the patient portal, but in other ways (i.e. creating a brochure or flier, posting portal tips on our web page, and also on the patient's after visit summary).

We would like to run additional eCW campaigns for other quality measures. We would also like to share patient visit forms and questionnaires through the portal a few days before the visit, but if not completed, they would be available through iPads in our office.

Primary Health Network

Our goal with all digital patient engagement solutions is to bridge the gap between providers and patients while streamlining office workflows. By implementing new digital tools, we can better meet patients' needs and embrace technology to support our staff's daily tasks.

Lessons Learned/Opportunities

North Side Christian Health Center

Key Takeaway: It takes a village!

“Everyone (from the front office to the back office) needs to be informed and engaged with the changes and understand the value of the changes.”

Primary Health Network

Key Takeaway: It takes a village and some practice!

“Include frontline staff in the development and engagement process of the patient. Pilot the patient engagement activity with a small group of practices and/or providers. If something in the initiative is not working as expected, don't hesitate to make changes.”