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Strong Start to Local Health Reform Effort

The North Country Accountable Care Organization (ACO) has learned that it received high marks for its work during its first year of operation. According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, when compared to similar organizations across the country, the North Country ACO rated above average on 26 of the 33 performance measures for which data was collected.

Performance measures included the experience of patients and family caregivers, care coordination, patient safety, preventative health, and special efforts for those diagnosed with diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease.

Sharon Beaty, President of North Country ACO Board, said, "We are extremely pleased with the first year results. Each of our member organizations worked hard to enhance the care we offer our patients. We look forward to working with individuals, families and other health care organizations as we continue our work to improve the health and well-being of area residents."

Accountable Care Organizations are groups of doctors and other health care providers working together to provide high quality service and care for their patients. The North Country ACO was established in 2012, and is comprised of the following health centers: Ammonoosuc Community Health Services, Coos County Family Health Services, Indian Stream Health Center and Mid-State Health Center.



“We are dedicated to promoting better care coordination, improving health and creating a collaborative environment across healthcare systems in rural northern New Hampshire,” said Ken Gordon, ACO Program Administrator. The organization works to provide Medicare fee-for-service beneficiaries with high quality service and care, while reducing the growth in Medicare expenditures through enhanced care coordination.

According to Nancy Frank, Executive Director of the North Country Health Consortium, “Instead of patients having to navigate complex health systems on their own, ACO member organizations work hand in hand with individuals and family caregivers to ensure that no one slips through the cracks. ACO’s encourage providers to work more closely together than ever before, ensuring better coordination across care settings.”

Provider participation in an ACO is purely voluntary, and Medicare beneficiaries retain their current ability to seek treatment from any provider they wish. ACO’s are not Medicare Advantage plans nor are they HMO’s. Beneficiaries with fee-for-service Medicare retain the right to use any doctor or hospital who accepts Medicare, at any time.

All of the North Country ACO member organizations are members of the North Country Health Consortium (NCHC). Consortium members include community hospitals, home health agencies, community mental health centers, emergency medical service professionals, social service providers and other groups. Collaboration through this long-standing, unique rural network provides the opportunity to better coordinate care, reduce unnecessary hospital and emergency department use, and improve the health of individuals and communities.

For more information about the North Country Health Consortium contact Nancy Frank at 603-259-3700 or visit the organization’s website at <http://www.northcountryaco.org/>. To



learn more about Accountable Care Organizations, please visit www.medicare.gov/acos.html or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227 (TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048)).