

CMMI Visits Connecticut

Representatives from the federal Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI), which funds the SIM grant, visited Connecticut this month.

Dr. Steve Cha, the Director of the State Innovation Group, urged Connecticut to keep Medicare's proposed Quality Payment Program in mind when developing and implementing our payment and delivery reforms. Watch the short video below for details.



The proposed rule (MACRA) that will put the Quality Payment Program will make substantial changes to the way Medicare providers are paid. The program has two tracks, the Merit Incentives Payment System (MIPS) and Alternative Advanced Payment Models (AAPM).

Connecticut's SIM was praised for its robust consumer engagement

As the national Quality Payment Program is rolled out, it will be critical that SIM payment and care models are aligned in the state of Connecticut in order to help providers make that transition.

- Steve Cha, CMMI



Steve Cha, Director of the State Innovation Group, CMMI

Also among the visitors:

- Christina Crider, Connecticut's SIM Project Officer
- Rob Houston, CHCS
- Colin Planalp, State Health Access Data Assistance Center, University of MN
- Patricia Mactaggart, ONC
- Akaki Lekichvili, CDC

Starting in 2019, most providers will participate in MIPS. In this track providers will have higher or lower earnings from Medicare based on their 2017 performance on specified measures such as quality of care. The AAPM track offers incentives for providers that participate in alternative payment models that meet certain criteria, such as having more than nominal risk. It is anticipated that many physicians will try to meet the requirements for AAPM.

Starting in 2021 (based on 2019 performance) providers will be able to count beneficiaries that are in Medicaid and commercial advanced APMs towards meeting AAPM beneficiary participation thresholds. This is significant because it means that the participation of providers in non-Medicare value-based payment models may help them earn incentives as part of the AAPM track. Dr. Cha noted that it is critical that SIM states think about how their strategy can create a pathway for providers who will be urgently looking for ways to succeed in either of the Quality Payment Program tracks in order to meet their requirements and maximize their earnings.

As the national Quality Payment Program is rolled out, doctors are likely to become anxious about meeting the new requirements and incentives. During the Healthcare Innovation Steering Committee, Dr. Cha urged that, for the sake of doctors, Connecticut should think about strategically narrowing the focus of reforms and aligning initiatives around Quality Payment Program opportunities.

Dr. Cha provided a national context for payment and care delivery reforms, and pointed to the Health & Human Services Secretary's goals of moving towards value based payment. In 2011 Medicare had no payments in alternative payment models, and this year they reached a target of 30% early. Private payers are setting similar goals. Congress put forth the Quality Payment Program to further these aims.

Dr. Cha praised Connecticut as being a leader in consumer engagement, and bringing stakeholders together. Having strong participation in reforms is important to their success.

Looking into the future, aligning Medicare with state specific reforms presents another important opportunity. For decades Medicare was a national program, but recent changes have made it possible to more closely align with state-level reforms.

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Lastly, Dr. Cha said that looking into the future, aligning Medicare with state specific reforms presents another important opportunity. For decades Medicare was a national program, but recent changes have made it possible to more closely align with state-level reforms. For example, Medicare is partnering with Maryland to implement an all-payer global budget model with hospitals to try to make it more profitable to keep a person out of the hospital rather than in. Dr. Cha said that Medicare and CMMI have an important role in state-based alignment and is eager to consider opportunities in Connecticut.