Working together to improve health care quality, outcomes, and affordability in Washington State.

Primary Care Report and Recommendations

2020

Contents

Primary care access and quality impact all 329 million Americans. Geographic access varies significantly and is often lower in areas with a higher proportion of people of color, adding to health disparities.

Primary care, widely identified as the cornerstone of the health care system, is the usual source of health promotion, disease prevention, and care for a population's acute and chronic health problems. The definition of primary care starts with a broad scope of services and general attributes and is often described in contrast to health care services provided for urgent needs or within a hospital or surgical setting.

Access to regular, high-quality care is a challenge for many. These issues are influenced and compounded by low reimbursement for primary care compared to specialty care and hospital care. Low reimbursement leads to not enough time being spent with an individual patient in the visit. Compounding the issue of low reimbursement is the fact that many of the activities expected of a high-performing primary care practice are not reimbursed by traditional fee-for-service payment approaches.

To address issues of limited access and uncertain definitions, the Bree Collaborative elected to develop standards to develop a state-wide definition for primary care to support multi-payor payment reform. The workgroup met through 2020 to recommend system- and individual-level changes to build a healthcare system that truly meetings the needs of a diverse population. The workgroup's goal is to foster a common understanding of primary care through defining primary care, discussing measurement of primary care, and outlining components of primary care that are impactful on population health.

This report outlines the benefits of accessing primary care for a population as well as the issues with current reimbursement models on page 3 and the focus areas for these recommendations on page 5. Pages 6-11 include checklists for primary care, for health plans, for people receiving care, and for employer groups to support the focus areas. Must have infrastructure elements for primary care are listed on page 6 including those around team-based, evidence-informed, and whole-person care; available behavioral health; patient panels; accessible care; and supportive health information technology. Primary care is further defined on pages 13-14 including a philosophical framework of being accountable, first contact, comprehensive, continuous, coordinated, and appropriate. Content of care visits is discussed on page 15 and approaches to reimbursement including measurement on page 18.

Adopted by the Bree Collaborative January 27, 2021.

The Dr. Robert Bree Collaborative was established in 2011 by Washington State House Bill 1311 *"…to provide a mechanism through which public and private healthcare stakeholders can work together to improve quality, health outcomes, and cost effectiveness of care in Washington State."* The Bree Collaborative was named in memory of Dr. Robert Bree, a leader in the imaging field and a key member of previous healthcare quality improvement collaborative projects.

Members are appointed by the Washington State Governor and include public healthcare purchasers for Washington State, private healthcare purchasers (employers and union trusts), health plans, physicians and other healthcare providers, hospitals, and quality improvement organizations. The Bree Collaborative is charged with identifying healthcare services annually with substantial variation in practice patterns, high utilization trends in Washington State, or patient safety issues. For each healthcare service, the Bree Collaborative identifies and recommends best-practice, evidence-based approaches that build upon existing efforts and quality improvement activities to decrease variation. In the bill, the legislature does not authorize agreements among competing healthcare providers or health carriers as to the price or specific level of reimbursement for healthcare services. Furthermore, it is not the intent of the legislature to mandate payment or coverage decisions by private healthcare purchasers or carriers.

> See **Appendix A** for a list of current Bree Collaborative members.

Recommendations are sent to the Washington State Healthcare Authority for review and approval. The Healthcare Authority (HCA) oversees Washington State's largest healthcare purchasers, Medicaid and the Public Employees Benefits Board Program, as well as other programs. The HCA uses the recommendations to guide state purchasing for these programs. The Bree Collaborative also strives to develop recommendations to improve patient health, healthcare service quality, and the affordability of healthcare for the private sector but does not have the authority to mandate implementation of recommendations.

> For more information about the Bree Collaborative, please visit: www.breecollaborative.org.

The Bree Collaborative elected to develop standards to develop a state-wide definition for primary care to support multi-payor payment reform. The workgroup met from January to XXX 2020 to recommend system- and individual-level changes to build a healthcare system that truly meetings the needs of a diverse population.

> See **Appendix B** for the Primary Care Workgroup charter and a list of members.

Adopted by the Bree Collaborative January 27, 2021.

Primary care, widely identified as the cornerstone of the health care system, is the usual source of health promotion, disease prevention, and care for a population's acute and chronic health problems.[1] Efforts to define primary care often start with a broad scope of services, general attributes in an outpatient or ambulatory care setting, and are often described in contrast to health care services provided for acute or urgent needs or within a hospital or surgical setting. The delivery of comprehensive primary care services is also frequently associated with certain types of providers that are trained to provide first contact, comprehensive, continuous, and coordinated care – the hallmarks of primary care.

Access and Outcomes

In a report from the Primary Care Collaborative, the authors note that "*consistent and growing evidence shows that primary care-oriented systems achieve better health outcomes, more health equity, and lower costs.*"[2] A lack of a sufficient primary care workforce is a growing issue that impacts accessibility in Washington State as well as nationally.[3]

Access to primary care depends on multiple factors: availability, accessibility or how close a delivery site is to where a person lives or works, convenience or the hours that the delivery site operates and the modes in which care is offered such as in-person or virtually, affordability or cost of care, and acceptability or how well the care that is offered matches a person's individual needs and preferences such as through the availability of care in different languages.[4] Accessibility, defined as physical proximity, is the most well-studied factor associated with individual and population health, consistently showing a positive impact when compared with populations farther away from primary care.[5] Early studies in the 1990s found an association between a higher ratio of primary care physicians at a state-level and population-level health outcomes such as lower all-cause mortality and mortality from heart disease, cancer, stroke, as well as infant mortality.[6] Presence of primary care providers is also associated with increased life span, reduction in infant low birth weight, better overall patient experience, and a person's self-rated health.[7,8,9]

Access to regular, high-quality care is a challenge for many. Analysis of urban census tracts show lower levels of access to primary care for specific populations, such as areas with a higher proportion of Black Americans.[10] Those living in rural areas also have lower levels of access to primary care.[11] A primary care delivery site may be located in close geographic proximity but may not be of high quality, may have hours that render it inaccessible, or the providers may not be taking new patients.

These issues are influenced and compounded by low reimbursement for primary care compared to specialty care and hospital care, with the United States spending between 5-7% of total health care expenditure on primary care and Washington State spending between 4.4% to 5.6% of total expenditure on primary care.[12] Low reimbursement leads to fewer physicians choosing to practice in primary care, opting instead for higher reimbursed and thus higher paying specialty care, and to not enough time being spent with an individual patient during primary care visits. Many argue that there is not currently

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enough time in a clinical visit to deliver all the services recommended by the US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) to a complete panel of patients without reducing panel size by half.[13]

Compounding the issue of low reimbursement is the fact that many of the activities expected of a high-performing primary care practice are not reimbursed by traditional fee-for-service payment approaches. Examples of these activities that are frequently identified as features of high-performing or "advanced" models of primary care are included here:

- Proactive outreach to patients with upcoming or overdue preventive tests or screenings

- Ongoing engagement with patients who have complex or multiple chronic conditions to ensure adherence to agreed upon care plan

- Active management

- Daily team huddles that consider the needs of all patients– those on the visit schedule for the day as well as those not on the schedule

- Health information technology implementations that support population and individual health analytics to properly resource and manage the patient panel while also meeting individual care needs

Recommendation Framework

The workgroup's goal is to foster a common understanding of primary care to increase primary care accessibility and availability.

Focus Area	Definition
Defining Primary Care	Team-based care led by an accountable provider that serves as a person's source of first contact with the larger healthcare system and coordinator of services that the person receives. Primary care includes a comprehensive array of appropriate, evidence-informed services to foster a continuous relationship over time. This array of services is coordinated by the accountable primary care provider but may exist in multiple care settings or be delivered in a variety of modes.
Components of Primary Care with Large Impact	- Care coordination - Integrated behavioral health - Disease prevention and screening - Chronic condition management - Medication management - Health promotion - Person-centered care that considers physical, emotional, and social needs
Measuring Primary Care	Based in claims, care delivered in an ambulatory setting by a predefined group of providers and team members as a proportion of total cost of care

Primary Care Site Checklist

Must have elements:

☐ Team-based care strategies (e.g., huddles, care management meetings, high-risk patient panel review) are consistently used through co-located or integrated models. The team can include the clinical team including nursing, social services, community services, and home-based care.

☐ Behavioral health provider(s) are part of the care team through co-located or integrated models

☐ Active patients are assigned or attributed to a primary care provider or team for advanced clinical judgment, the primary care team may/may not reside in the same physical setting and does not need to have the same organizational affiliation to act as a team

☐ Care is evidence-based or evidence informed

☐ Services that address the whole person (multiple organ systems) are regularly offered including:

    ☐ Active management of chronic diseases

    ☐ Acute care for minor illnesses and injuries

    ☐ Office-based procedures and diagnostic tests

    ☐ Preventive services including USPSTF recommended cancer screenings

    ☐ Patient education

    ☐ Self-management support

    ☐ Medication management

    ☐ Chronic condition management

    ☐ Behavioral health support

☐ Convenient and flexible care options allow easy access to the right care in the right setting when needed.

    ☐ At least one alternative to traditional physical and behavioral health office visits is offered (e.g., e-visits, phone visits, group visits, home visits, alternate location visits)

    ☐ Site also offers expanded hours (e.g., early mornings, evenings, weekends)

☐ Health information technology is in place that supports management of the patient panel at a population health level while also supporting optimal care at the individual patient level. To be effective, the primary care provider must be "connected" to the broader healthcare ecosystem through some mechanism that supports interoperability, such as a Health Information Exchange (HIE) that supports a longitudinal patient-centric record and near/real time alerts to support

The following are strongly recommended for high quality primary care

Infrastructure

☐ Forms and protocols (e.g., mission statement, employee materials) reflect that the delivery site has an open and affirming environment that includes non-discrimination in hiring practices

☐ Age-appropriate and culturally inclusive reading materials and audiovisual aids are available in the reception area and examination rooms

Access

☐ The site is physically accessible to those with mobility issues including entering/exiting, moving within the facility, and during the clinical encounter such as seating within an exam room.

☐ Translation services for languages common among the patient population are available. This can include providers who speak a patient and family's language, presence of a certified interpreter, or a telephonic interpreter. Family or friends are **not** used to translate during a clinical encounter

☐ Patient-facing forms and information:

   ☐ Are readable at an 8th grade reading level
   ☐ Are available in languages that reflect the patient population
   ☐ Are available in accessible formats (e.g., braille, large print, audio)
   ☐ Use inclusive, non-stigmatizing language
   ☐ Reaffirm the confidentiality of information

Information

☐ Health record for each active patient contains at least the following and is updated as needed during a visit:

   ☐ Problem list
   ☐ Medication list
   ☐ Surgical history
   ☐ Allergies
   ☐ Race and ethnicity (if disclosed by the person)
   ☐ Preferred language
   ☐ Sexual orientation
   ☐ Gender identity, chosen pronouns, and chosen name
   ☐ BMI/BMI percentile/growth chart as appropriate
   ☐ Immunization
   ☐ Parenting intention in the next year, if applicable
   ☐ Advance directive or other advance care plan including goals, preferences, needs
   ☐ Other care needs (e.g., oral health, behavioral health)

☐ Care plan is coordinated, documented, and accessible to all members of the primary care team, regardless of their physical location or organizational affiliation, and others as needed

☐ Risk stratification process is in place for all empaneled patients that includes:

   ☐ Medical need
   ☐ Behavioral diagnoses
   ☐ Health-related social needs

☐ At least every two years, site post-visit surveys to measure patient reported outcomes are sent to people who have accessed care including questions on access to care, provider or health team communication, coordination of care, and staff helpfulness

☐ Whole person needs are identified at a population level and processes are developed to meet needs

- Quality and effectiveness of care improve over time
- Patient visits with assigned clinician or team are tracked and reported to health plans
- Capacity to query and use data to support clinical and business decisions

Referrals

- Agreements or contracts among providers, plans, and other organizations to coordinate transitions are in place including:
    - Emergency department and inpatient visits
    - Residential and partial treatment facility stays
    - Stays at substance abuse treatment facilities
    - Community resources to support non-medical social needs that impede health improvement
- Referrals to offsite services are tracked
    - Overdue referrals prompt outreach to the patient
- Referral patterns are identified and adjusted to improve patient outcomes and reduce cost and unnecessary care
- Hospitals and EDs responsible for most patients' hospitalizations and ED visits are identified
    - Timeliness of notification and information transfer is assessed
- Opportunities to work with ACHs to improve community supports are identified

Content of Care

- People are screened at least annually using a validated instrument for:
    - Depression
    - Anxiety
    - Suicidality
    - Tobacco use
    - Alcohol
    - Other drug use
        - $\rightarrow$ Process for follow-up of brief intervention, brief treatment or referral to treatment is documented
- Coordination of care and meeting care needs (e.g., dentists who may be prescribing)
- During a clinical visit, patients and providers engage in:
    - Self-management support
    - Shared decision making
    - Motivational interviewing for behavior change

Patients and Family Members Checklist

- ☐ Select a primary care provider who meets your needs
- ☐ Think about your broad health and wellness-related goals and how your provider and care team might help you meet these goals
- ☐ In situations where different options are available, give your provider(s) information about your values and preferences, and discuss options, tradeoffs, and implications of a decision together
- ☐ Consider your primary care provider/team your first point of contact to the larger health system for all non-emergent care needs

Health Plan Checklist

☐ Members receive information about the value of primary care, how to access primary care within the network, and are asked or otherwise encouraged to select a primary care provider/team at enrollment

☐ Members select or are paneled to a primary care provider/team through a claims-based attribution process or other assignment mechanism that is transparent to the purchaser (employer/union), as well as to the individual member.

☐ Members are notified when a primary care provider is held accountable for their care through a claims-based attribution process or other assignment mechanism. Members should be able to change this by notifying the health plan of their preferred primary care provider within the available network.

☐ Data from care delivery sites is collected and aggregated to understand variation in care and look for underlying issues such as disparities in access or services provided within and across:

- o Race and ethnicity
- o Language
- o Sex
- o Screening for relevant cancers of the sexual and reproductive health system
- o Prenatal care utilization
- o Perinatal care outcomes reported for those who are Black, indigenous, and people of color

☐ Health plan records accurately reflect a person's gender, pronouns, and chosen name.
If gathered at a health plan level such as upon enrollment, this is communicated to care delivery sites with the required permissions to do so in place at the member/individual level

☐ A payment mechanism supports primary care features that are not reimbursed through traditional fee-for-service payments. These mechanisms include value-based reimbursement such as fee-for-service enhancements or prospective payments made in the form of per member per month (PMPM) payments that could include incentives for transformation, performance-based incentives, or more expansive forms of capitation

- o Multipayor models to increase consistency and reduce unnecessary administrative complexity are prioritized
- o Health plans partner with providers and practices to share relevant information including cost (e.g., services, medication)
- o Payment mechanisms are clearly articulated to employers with the stipulation that the qualifications for payment eligibility and the measures of success are clearly understood and openly shared

Employer/Purchaser Checklist

☐ Those who are covered under the selected plan(s) receive information about the value of primary care, how to access primary care within the available plan options, and are asked or encouraged to select a primary care provider/team at enrollment

☐ Benefit designs are structured to encourage the use of primary care including Value-Based Insurance Design (VBID) mechanisms tied to primary care, such as:

  o $0 cost for specified in-person or virtual care services delivered by the individual's named primary care provider (that provider is named by the individual or assigned through an attribution or other mechanism)

  o Lower out-of-pocket cost for specialty care accessed after seeing one's primary care provider/team

  o When qualified high deductible health plans with Health Savings Accounts (HSA's) are in place, the new rules allowing for first dollar coverage under an expanded definition of "preventive services" have been incorporated.

☐ Agree to support non-fee-for-service payment mechanisms for primary care in partnership with other purchasers to reduce administrative complexity. Non-fee-for-service forms of primary care payment must be clearly articulated by health plans and supported by employers with the stipulation that the qualifications for payment eligibility and the measures of success are also clearly understood and openly shared.

☐ Contracts with health plans and/or directly with delivery systems require:

  o Measurement of primary care spend

  o Total cost of care

  o Measurement of quality of care

  o Measurement of disparities in care outcomes by race

  o Reporting of primary care spend

  o Targets for primary care spend

  o Requirement that consumers select or be paneled to a primary care provider or team

  o When individual selection is not in place, the primary care provider/team to whom the individual is assigned is clearly communicated and the individual has the ability to change that assignment

  o Penalties for indicators of not-managed and not-coordinated care, like avoidable hospital readmissions or avoidable ED

Defining Primary Care

The concept of primary care was first introduced in the 1920s and described by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) in 1978 as being "*accessible, comprehensive, coordinated, continuous, and accountable.*"[14] Barbara Starfield further describes primary care as being characterized by first-contact care and being longitudinal and comprehensive.[15] Primary care can further be defined as including advocacy, taking place in the context of a community and family, including goal-oriented care and health promotion, being integrated, and being based on a relationship.[16] In many studies, primary care is defined by four Cs: **first-contact care** that is **comprehensive** in addressing a wide variety of issues from sprains to behavioral health to prenatal care, is **continuous** with multiple touch-points over time, and is **coordinated**. In order to know whether primary care spend is increasing in the state, Washington must first develop an agreed upon definition of primary care that will allow for accurate measurement.

The IOM categorizes possible definitions into care provided by certain clinicians, a particular set of activities, a level or setting of care, the attributes themselves, or as a strategy for organizing a system.[17] More simply, primary care can be defined broadly as consisting of the care provided by a subgroup of medical providers, the set of functions that providers within and outside of that subgroup perform, and/or a general orientation of a health delivery system.[18] A family medicine physician may order a thyroid test which would be considered part of primary care while an endocrinologist ordering that same test may not necessarily be considered primary care. These provider, service, and system categories have been expanded by Milbank into:[19]

- Provider: All the services delivered by pre-defined primary care providers in an ambulatory setting.
- Service: Services that meet particular definitions including being: comprehensive, first-contact for a wide variety of (not limited) conditions, coordinated, and taking place over time (longitudinal).
- Service: All office visits and preventative services within a category independent of the provider type.
- Service and Provider: Based in claims, specific set of pre-defined services delivered by pre-defined primary care providers not limited to an ambulatory setting.
- Health systems: Primary care delivered at a system level, useful for capitated systems but most difficult to measure.

In Washington State, primary care provider is defined as "a general practice physician, family practitioner, internist, pediatrician, osteopathic physician, naturopath, physician assistant, osteopathic physician assistant, and advanced registered nurse practitioner licensed under Title 18 RCW."[20] The workgroup sought to operationalize

Primary Care
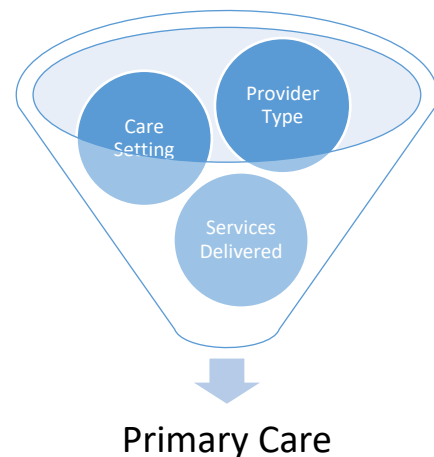
the four Cs described above to develop a standardized definition: Team-based care led by an accountable provider that serves as a person's source of first contact with the larger healthcare system and coordinator of the health care services that the person receives. Primary care includes a comprehensive array of appropriate, evidence-informed services to foster a continuous relationship over time.

If yes to ALL of the following, then is primary care:

1. **Accountability** through a team and/or provider that includes physical health, behavioral health, and care coordination. Advanced clinical judgement for a person's care/panel of patients lies with one of the following:
   - Doctor of Medicine – General practice, Family Medicine, General Internal Medicine, Geriatrics, General Pediatrics, Adolescent Medicine
   - Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine - General practice, Family Medicine, General Internal Medicine, Geriatrics, General Pediatrics, Adolescent Medicine
   - Advance Registered Nurse Practitioner – General Practice, Family, Adult, Pediatric, Women's Health
   - Physician Assistant – General Practice, Family, Adult, Pediatric, Women's Health
   - Osteopathic Physician Assistant – General Practice, Family, Adult, Pediatric, Women's Health

   Other team members can include but are not limited to: naturopath, psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker, registered nurse, medical assistant, care coordinator, etc.

2. **First Contact** – Does the team assess, triage, and direct a person's health or health care issues as they first arise?
3. **Comprehensive** – Does the team care for the whole person and provide services that address multiple organ systems including active management of chronic physical (e.g., COPD, diabetes) and behavioral health (e.g., depression, anxiety, substance use disorder) conditions as well as USPSTF recommended screening and preventive services?
4. **Continuous** – Does the team maintain or attempt to develop a longitudinal relationship?
5. **Coordinated** – Does the team take responsibility for a person's care through managing a care plan in coordination with a multidisciplinary team and/or with offsite referrals?
6. **Appropriate** – Does the team provide evidence-based, person-centered medicine that includes behavioral health?

Figure 1: Example of Care Provided Over the Course of a Person's Life

Adopted by the Bree Collaborative January 27, 2021.

Content of Care

Disease Identification or Screening and Disease Treatment

Primary care practices screen for both communicable diseases and non-communicable diseases likely to be present in an individual or which are common within a patient population. Screening for non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes mellitus, and cancer are done based on risk such as a person's age. Screening for communicable disease should also be done on risk and possible exposure.

Cancer screening is a key component of preventative health. Approximately 39.3% of people will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime.[21] The most common types of cancer are breast, lung and bronchus, prostate, colorectal, and melanoma and skin cancer. For example, the USPSTF recommends **(not an exhaustive list)**

- **Breast** "biennial screening mammography for women aged 50 to 74 years."[22]
- **Prostate** "For men aged 55 to 69 years, the decision to undergo periodic prostate-specific antigen (PSA)-based screening for prostate cancer should be an individual one. Before deciding whether to be screened, men should have an opportunity to discuss the potential benefits and harms of screening with their clinician and to incorporate their values and preferences in the decision. Screening offers a small potential benefit of reducing the chance of death from prostate cancer in some men. However, many men will experience potential harms of screening, including false-positive results that require additional testing and possible prostate biopsy; overdiagnosis and overtreatment; and treatment complications, such as incontinence and erectile dysfunction. In determining whether this service is appropriate in individual cases, patients and clinicians should consider the balance of benefits and harms on the basis of family history, race/ethnicity, comorbid medical conditions, patient values about the benefits and harms of screening and treatment-specific outcomes, and other health needs. Clinicians should not screen men who do not express a preference for screening."[23]
- **Colorectal** "starting at age 50 years and continuing until age 75 years. [24]
- **Cervical** "screening for cervical cancer every 3 years with cervical cytology alone in women aged 21 to 29 years. For women aged 30 to 65 years, the USPSTF recommends screening every 3 years with cervical cytology alone, every 5 years with high-risk human papillomavirus (hrHPV) testing alone, or every 5 years with hrHPV testing in combination with cytology (cotesting)."[25]

Health Promotion

Clinical care typically focuses on disease or illness identification and management or treatment; however, the function of preventing disease and promoting health broadly is equally or more important in a person's and in a population's health. Health promotion within primary care includes educating and motivating a person about a healthy lifestyle (e.g., exercise, tobacco cessation), assessing needs or preferences and readiness for any lifestyle change as well as chronic care management, medication management, and vaccinations against common diseases. As almost half of all Americans have a chronic disease including heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, respiratory conditions, and arthritis, promoting health is paramount to managing the health of a population.[26]

The American Medical Association proposes that health promotion be collaborative and that providers:[27]

- *"Keep current with preventive care guidelines that apply to their patients and ensure that the interventions they recommend are well supported by the best available evidence.*
- *Educate patients about relevant modifiable risk factors.*
- *Recommend and encourage patients to have appropriate vaccinations and screenings.*
- *Encourage an open dialogue regarding circumstances that may make it difficult to manage chronic conditions or maintain a healthy lifestyle, such as transportation, work and home environments, and social support systems.*
- *Collaborate with the patient to develop recommendations that are most likely to be effective.*
- *When appropriate, delegate health promotion activities to other professionals or other resources available in the community who can help counsel and educate patients.*
- *Consider the health of the community when treating their own patients and identify and notify public health authorities if and when they notice patterns in patient health that may indicate a health risk for others.*
- *Recognize that modeling health behaviors can help patients make changes in their own lives*."

Health promotion can often include motivational interviewing, "a patient-centered approach to counseling for guiding behavior change, usually when a patient feels ambivalent, e.g., about lifestyle choices or adherence to medication."[28] Motivational interviewing can occur due to the person receiving care not understanding the impact of a choice, competing values and priorities, or other reasons. The clinician then attempts to identify and reconcile these conflicts to achieve desired goals

Care Coordination

Coordinating or synchronizing a person's engagements with the broad health care system has been associated with lower inpatient care utilization and better health outcomes.[29] Care coordination for those with complex care needs or multiple comorbidities is even more important. Specifically, building relationships with care partners, supporting people as they transition between care sites, and information exchange are positively associated with lower inpatient care utilization.[30] AHRQ defines care coordination as "deliberately organizing patient care activities and sharing information among all of the participants concerned with a patient's care to achieve safer and more effective care."[31]

The mechanisms through which care coordination is achieved can take many forms, be conducted by different types of staff, clinical and non-clinical, and is not typically reimbursed in a fee-for-service

environment. For care coordination to be truly successful, the person's social needs must also be considered along with their medical needs including needs around transportation, access to food, and housing security.[32]

Care coordination efforts vary from low to high intensity based on the need of an individual and are often also offered by specialty care such as for treatment of cancer. Within primary care, examples of care coordination include:[33]

- *"Easy access to a range of health care services and providers*
- *Good communications and effective care plan transitions between providers*
- *A focus on the total health care needs of the patient*
- *Clear and simple information that patients can understand"*

Integrated Behavioral Health

Mental illness and substance use disorders, together called behavioral health, are common, with an estimated 46% of adults experiencing mental illness or a substance abuse disorder at some point in their lifetime, 25% in a year.[34] Patients with chronic medical conditions and behavioral health issues have an estimated two to three times higher health care costs.[35] Depression is especially common among those with a chronic illness, such as diabetes, resulting in lower adherence to clinical recommendations, worse physical functioning, and higher cost.[36]

On average, 80 million Americans visit an ambulatory care center with major depressive disorder as their primary diagnosis, indicating potential to impact patient outcomes through treatment within the context of primary care.[37] Primary care providers have reported preferring integrated care, reporting more effective communication and lower stigma about mental health and substance use for patients.[38] Research has consistently shown healthier patients and populations including decreased depression, anxiety, and positive impacts on medical conditions including diabetes, increases in quality of life, and higher patient satisfaction.[39,40]

Person-Centered Care

The person receiving care is at the heart of every care relationship. Shared decision making, where appropriate, is a key component of person-centered care. This is a, "*process that allows patients and their providers to make health care decisions together, taking into account the best scientific evidence available, as well as the patient's values and preferences*."[41] Motivational interviewing is behavioral change achieved through identifying patient values and motivators and using these to drive progress toward a desired health outcome.

Shared decision making for preference-sensitive conditions has been shown to help people gain knowledge about their health condition(s) and possible outcomes of care and to have more confidence in their decisions.[42,43] The process has also been associated with improved patient satisfaction with care, improved health outcomes, and with better appropriateness of care.[44,45]

A key mechanism to strengthening primary care is changing how we pay for primary care. Current spending in Washington State, ranges from 4.4%-5.6% of total health spending on primary care services. This low reimbursement for primary care services coupled with fact that traditional fee-for-service payment approaches do not reimburse many of the activities to support high-performing primary care practices (i.e. care coordination, population health) has created a need create new payment models to improve primary care delivery.

To understand how to create new primary care payment models, the Workgroup has organized the discussion to include:

- A description of the range of payment types available, including the central features of each
- A discussion of initiatives under way across the country to change the primary care mechanism to inform efforts in Washington State. This discussion includes the identification of features central to these efforts, including practice transformation and patient attribution/assignment considerations.
- The implications for measurement based on the system as it is today (primarily fee-for-service) and as may be envisioned under a new payment model(s) that support the transformation of primary care in Washington state with non-fee-for service mechanisms.

Primary Care Payment Types

Like most other forms of health care delivered in Washington State and across the country, the predominant form of payment is fee-for-service. While there have been many efforts to enhance fee-for-service with various value-based incentives tied to cost and/or quality measures, the underlying payment for the services delivered to patients continues to be fee-for-service.

It has already been noted that many of the important components of primary care described in the previous section are not directly reimbursable through a fee-for-service payment mechanism. This represents an obstacle to strengthening primary care in the best of circumstances. The Workgroup writes these recommendations at a time when the impact of COVID-19 cannot be ignored – particularly as it relates to primary care. The Larry Green Center, in collaboration with the Primary Care Collaborative has been surveying primary care practices weekly to assess the impact that COVID-19 is having on primary care practices since mid-March. In the latest survey report published on their [website](#), they state that *"The primary care platform is shrinking. The low level and time limited support offered through previous federal relief efforts are ill-matched with the magnitude of COVID-19 challenges."* Their survey results indicate that "2% of practices have closed, another 2% are considering bankruptcy, and 10% are unable to be certain of their solvency 4 weeks out" and that "1 in 5 clinicians are now considering leaving primary care and 13% could not answer that question either way." When basic services are not being delivered, primary care practices, that operate on thin margins in the best of

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circumstances, cannot survive. This also means that, in many cases, basic health care needs of individuals are not being met.

The range of primary care payment mechanisms available are described at a very high level in the table below. There are many iterations and variations within each of these categories. This table is intended to ground the discussion around measurement of primary care spending by describing the broad payment types included in this table and used as terms throughout this document.

Table 1: Reimbursement Model Comparison

	Fee-for-Service	Fee-for-Service-Based Incentives	Non-Fee-for-Service Prospective Payments
What triggers payment?	Delivery of a Service	Achievement of threshold for cost, quality, experience measures	Matching a patient to a qualified provider
How is payment made?	A discrete payment made as services are delivered	In a variety of ways: enhanced ffs, lump sums, quarterly bonuses, etc.	Typically on a PMPM monthly basis, but may be quarterly
What is covered by the payment?	The actual services delivered	Performance on a wide range of quality measures – cost, clinical, experience	Enhanced or "advanced" components of primary care not covered by ffs
Does the payment reflect the intensity of the services delivered?	Yes, if FFS coding is accurate	Unknown	Yes, if risk adjusted accurately at the individual patient level

It is not within the scope of the workgroup to recommend a specific payment type. However, the workgroup believes that noting the inadequacy of a fee-for-service payment mechanism to support the implementation of primary care as defined or envisioned by this workgroup. The workgroup strongly encourages the adoption of non-fee-for-service payment mechanisms in a manner that aligns key healthcare stakeholders – providers, payers, and purchasers. These recommendations are reflected in the Stakeholder Checklists.

Primary Care Payment Initiatives

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) launched Comprehensive Primary Care Plus (CPC+), a multi-payer primary care improvement initiative in 2017, the largest single primary care payment demonstration model in the US. CPC+ builds on the learnings derived from a smaller five-year Comprehensive Primary Care Plus (CPC) demonstration. Alignment across the commercial and Medicaid plans that voluntarily participate in CPC+ is an important point of emphasis in CPC+. The 18 CPC+ regions

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were selected based on the number and strength of private payers (commercial, Medicaid MCOs and Medicare Advantage) and state agencies willing to work together on a regional basis to do the following:

- Compensate primary care practices using prospective PMPM payment mechanisms (with or without fee-for-service; the specific approach is left to each organization and payment levels are not discussed across payers or specified by CMS/CMMI)
- Align with CMS and other payers in the region on quality measurement – both the identification of key metrics and to aggregate the data used for measurement and evaluation of participating primary care practices
- Work in collaboration with other payers in the region to support practice transformation through learning collaboratives, shared resources, such as practice transformation consultants, etc.

The evidence on how well CPC+ is working is mixed. CMS has retained Mathematica to conduct its evaluation of CPC+ based on its impact in the Medicare population. The impact on the lives covered by the private payers is not included in Mathematica's evaluation. The evidence for how well this is working in the private sector has been less robust but is starting to emerge. Recently, the most significant payer in the Arkansas region which has been a part of CPC and CPC+ published a white paper that reports significant savings in the total cost of care for patients whose primary care provider is in the CPC+ model vs. those that are not. Similar evidence from other regions is beginning to emerge in conference settings but has not yet been published.

Independently and prior to CPC+, the Oregon Health Authority developed and established the Patient Centered Primary Care Home Program due to state legislation in 2009. The program sets standards, certifies individual practices, and works to incentivize the population's use of the certified primary care homes.[46] Core attributes of the program include: access to care; accountability; comprehensive, whole-person care; continuity; and person and family-centered care with 11 must-pass standards such as offering advice through telephone and five possible tiers.[21] All of the following are able to become a certified primary care home: Physical health providers; Behavioral, addictions and mental health care providers with integrated primary care services; Solo practitioners; Group practices; Community mental health centers with integrated primary care services; Rural health clinics; Federally qualified health centers; and School-based health centers.

Key learnings from these and other primary care payment initiatives underscores the importance of non-fee-for-service payments and a multi-payer approach. Specific considerations around implementation of these models is best supported when there are common understandings and approaches to implementation across payers to support practice transformation.

Attribution

Decisions for attribution include: unit of analysis (patient versus episode of care); signal for responsibility (professional costs versus number of evaluation and management visits); number of clinicians that can be assigned responsibility (single physician versus multiple); and minimum threshold for assigning responsibility (majority of visits or costs versus plurality of visits or costs).[47]

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Measurement

The workgroup recommends that annual primary care spend initially be measured with claims data such that the numerator includes all services delivered in an ambulatory setting by a predefined group of providers and team members and the denominator is the total cost of care including ambulatory and non-ambulatory care services, laboratory tests, drug costs, imaging, and other fees.

Accurate measurement of primary care depends on availability of data and how primary care is defined. Claims data, derived from fee-for-service payment, has been used imperfectly to measure the attributes of the four Cs (first contact, comprehensive, continuous, and coordinated). However, billable codes do not necessarily capture all elements of this framework including members of the primary care team accountable for care but who do not bill separately from a provider. Further, the lack of a nationally accepted definition of primary care is a major impediment to assessing and increasing the primary care expenditures uniformly across states.

Despite issues with attribution and definition of providers, several studies have developed strategies to estimate primary care spending including:

- Milbank Memorial Fund's [Report Standardizing the Measurement of Commercial Health Plan Primary Care Spending](#)
- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's [Interpretation of Health Claims Data](#)
- Reid R, Damberg C, Friedberg MW. [Primary Care Spending in the Fee-for-Service Medicare Population](#). JAMA Intern Med. 2019 Jul 1;179(7):977-980.
- Reiff J, Brennan N, Fuglesten Biniek J. [Primary Care Spending in the Commercially Insured Population](#). JAMA. 2019 Dec 10;322(22):2244-2245.

In 2019, Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) was mandated by legislation to develop a report on primary care spend. The report notes that comparisons between Washington's percent expenditure and national averages or other states' averages depend on different definitions. Also, this 2019 report does not include non-claims-based care such care coordination activities. Reports from the states of Oregon and Rhode Island include non-claims care that may artificially lower Washington's numbers.[12]

To develop a proxy measure for primary care spend, groups have operated on various assumptions. If defined by provider, the assumption is that a group of subspecialists (i.e., family medicine) <u>always</u> offers primary care and that other groups of subspecialists <u>never</u> provide primary care (i.e., emergency medicine). This assumption holds true for some but not all disciplines. Advance registered nurse practitioners (ARNPs) and physician assistants (PAs) practice in a multitude of settings, including surgical care, which may not be adequately captured based on limitations of what is captured in claims data. The 2019 OFM report adjusted the total claims from ARNPs and PAs by 41% and 34%, respectively.

The OFM report presents narrow and broad definitions of primary care, differing based the types of providers who are assumed to be providing primary care. The narrow definition only includes providers who are traditionally considered to perform primary care while the broad definition includes a wider range of provider taxonomy codes includes behavioral health providers, clinical nurse specialists, registered nurses, midwives, and a host of other providers who are not typically considered general

practitioners.[12] The OFM stakeholder group also reviewed procedure codes and created both narrow and broad definitions of services qualifying as primary care. Only claims which met both the provider and service definitions of primary care were counted toward the state's total health care expenditure, with the narrow definition yielding 4.4% and the broad 5.6%.[12]

However, the OFM report noted that deficiencies inherent to the Washington All Payor Claims Database claims database, combined with lack of a firm definition for primary care, limit the report's accuracy in some regards. Claims data does not capture, for example, whether or not the location of services provided was a primary care clinic. As was mentioned earlier, Washington lacks a way to measure non-claims-based expenditures. The OFM report mentions a number of other systemic impediments to accurate measurement that may need to be addressed in order to calculate an accurate primary care expenditure percentage for the state.[12]

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Appendix A: Bree Collaborative Members

Member	Title	Organization
Susie Dade, MS		
Gary Franklin, MD, MPH	Medical Director	Washington State Department of Labor and Industries
Stuart Freed, MD	Chief Medical Officer	Confluence Health
Richard Goss, MD	Medical Director	Harborview Medical Center – University of Washington
Darcy Jaffe, MN, ARNP, NE-BC, FACHE	Senior Vice President, Safety & Quality	Washington State Hospital Association
Sonja Kellen	Global Benefits Director	Microsoft
Dan Kent, MD	Chief Medical Officer, Community Plan	UnitedHealthcare
Wm. Richard Ludwig, MD	Chief Medical Officer, Accountable Care Organization	Providence Health and Services
Greg Marchand	Director, Benefits & Policy and Strategy	The Boeing Company
Robert Mecklenburg, MD	Medical Director, Center for Health Care Solutions	Virginia Mason Medical Center
Kimberly Moore, MD	Associate Chief Medical Officer	Franciscan Health System
Carl Olden, MD	Family Physician	Pacific Crest Family Medicine, Yakima
Drew Oliveira, MD	Executive Medical Director	Regence BlueShield
Mary Kay O'Neill, MD, MBA	Partner	Mercer
John Robinson, MD, SM	Chief Medical Officer	First Choice Health
Jeanne Rupert, DO, PhD	Provider	One Medical
Angela Sparks, MD	Medical Director Clinical Knowledge Development & Support	Kaiser Permanente Washington
Hugh Straley, MD (Chair)	Retired	Medical Director, Group Health Cooperative; President, Group Health Physicians
Shawn West, MD		
Laura Kate Zaichkin, MPH	Director of Health Plan Performance and Strategy	SEIU 775 Benefits Group
Judy Zerzan, MD, MPH	Chief Medical Officer	Washington State Health Care Authority

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Appendix B: Primary Care Charter and Roster

Problem Statement

Primary care is widely identified as the cornerstone of the health care system, serving as a usual source of care that is focused on acute and chronic disease detection, management, treatment, and prevention.[48] While provision of primary care has been shown to contribute to population-level reductions in morbidity and mortality, access to regular, high-quality care is a challenge for many people in Washington State.[49] Further, reimbursement for primary care is low compared to specialty care, with the United States spending between 5-7% of total health care expenditure on primary care and Washington between 4.4% to 5.6% of total expenditure.[50,51]

Aim

To foster a common understanding of primary care in order to increase primary care accessibility and availability.

Purpose

To propose evidence-based recommendations to the full Bree Collaborative on:

- A common definition, current and aspirational, for primary care services including behavioral health (i.e., providers of, components of, locations of service)
- Components of primary care with the largest impact on individual and population health
- A mechanism for measuring primary care spend

Duties & Functions

The Primary Care workgroup will:
- Research evidence-based and expert-opinion informed guidelines and best practices (emerging and established).
- Consult relevant professional associations and other stakeholder organizations and subject matter experts for feedback, as appropriate.
- Meet for approximately ten-twelve months, as needed.
- Provide updates at Bree Collaborative meetings.
- Post draft report(s) on the Bree Collaborative website for public comment prior to sending report to the Bree Collaborative for approval and adoption.
- Present findings and recommendations in a report.
- Recommend data-driven and practical implementation strategies including metrics or a process for measurement.
- Create and oversee subsequent subgroups to help carry out the work, as needed.
- Revise this charter as necessary based on scope of work.

Structure

The workgroup will consist of individuals confirmed by Bree Collaborative members or appointed by the chair of the Bree Collaborative or the workgroup chair. The chair of the workgroup will be appointed by

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the chair of the Bree Collaborative. The Bree Collaborative program director and program assistant will staff and provide management and support services for the workgroup.

Less than the full workgroup may convene to: gather and discuss information; conduct research; analyze relevant issues and facts; or draft recommendations for the deliberation of the full workgroup. A quorum shall be a simple majority and shall be required to accept and approve recommendations to send to the Bree Collaborative.

Meetings

The workgroup will hold meetings as necessary. The program director will conduct meetings along with the chair, arrange for the recording of each meeting, and distribute meeting agendas and other materials prior to each meeting. Additional workgroup members may be added at the discretion of the workgroup chair.

Name	Title	Organization
Judy Zerzan, MD, MPH (Chair)	Chief Medical Officer	Washington State Health Care Authority
Patricia Auerbach, MD, MBA	Senior Medical Director	United Health Care
Cynthia Burdick, MD	Medical Director, Medicare and Medicaid	Kaiser Permanente Washington
Tony Butruille, MD	Chair, Primary Care Investment Task Force	Washington Academy of Family Physicians
Jason Fodeman, MD	Associate Medical Director	Washington State Department of Labor and Industries
Bianca Frogner, PhD	Associate Professor, Family Medicine; Director of Center for Health Workforce Studies	University of Washington School of Medicine
Ingrid Gerbino, MD, FACP	Chief, Department of Primary Care	Virginia Mason
Karen Johnson, PhD, MHSA	Director of Performance Improvement and Innovation	Washington Health Alliance
Louise Kaplan, PhD, ARNP, FNP-BC, FAANP, FAAN	Associate Professor, Associate Academic Director	Washington State University Vancouver College of Nursing
Cat Mazzawy, RN, MSN, CPPS	Sr. Director for Safety & Quality	Washington State Hospital Association
Carl Olden, MD	Family Physician	Virginia Mason Memorial
Julie Osgood, DrPH	VP Clinic Operations	Valley Medical Center
Mary Kay O'Neill, MS, MBA	Partner	Mercer
Ashok Reddy, MD, MS	Assistant Professor, Medicine	University of Washington School of Medicine, Veterans Administration
Keri Waterland, PhD, MAOB	Division Director, Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery	Health Care Authority
Laura Kate Zaichkin, MPH	Director, Health Plan Performance and Strategy	SEIU 775 Benefits Group

Thank you to Susie Dade.

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The Knoster model for managing complex change argues that for a successful change to occur, a system needs vision, skills, incentives, resources, and an action plan.[52] The lack of any of these elements leads to confusion, anxiety, resistance, frustration, or false starts, respectively.

- Vision – Outlined in these Bree Collaborative recommendations (needed to overcome confusion)
- Skills – Already exist (needed to overcome anxiety)
- Incentives – Multi-Payer Approach to non-fee-for service payment, such as Transformation of Care Fee (needed to overcome resistance)
- Resources – Payor-agnostic resources to reduce the administrative burden placed on practices dealing with multiple payment mechanisms, misaligned quality incentives and/or data collection mechanisms (needed to overcome frustration)
- Action Plan – Outlined in these recommendations as Stakeholder Checklists (needed to overcome false starts)

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