



Transitions: Handle with Care is dedicated to helping hospitals and their cross-continuum partners identify high-impact strategies that reduce readmissions. This playbook is designed to update and accelerate your strategy to reduce readmissions, recognizing that all hospitals already have readmissions reduction efforts in place. But, as a field, these efforts have taken on greater significance because reducing readmissions is now a closely measured metric of Maryland's new Medicare waiver. Readmissions to any hospital, from any hospital, now affect us all, as the Medicare waiver tests must be passed as a state.

Why re-evaluate your readmissions reduction strategy now?

As a requirement of the new Medicare waiver, Maryland's hospitals must reduce readmissions by an estimated 5-10 percent per year, each year, in order to reach the national average Medicare readmission rate by 2018. In other words, between today and the end of 2018, we may need to reduce readmissions by an estimated 30 percent. This challenging goal will require new investments and expanded strategies.

Expanding your readmissions reduction portfolio

This playbook will outline a series of ideas for improving hospital-based services to help reduce readmissions from post-acute and community-based providers. The aggressive timelines outlined in the waiver and our consultation with national experts lead us to recommend that you develop and manage a multi-faceted portfolio of efforts that includes: improving standard care for all patients, improving collaborative care with post-acute providers, and providing transitional care services for high-risk patients leaving your hospital.

Investing for success

Financial incentives for hospitals to invest in effective transitions of care and alternatives to acute-care utilization are changing as most Maryland hospitals transition to a payment system based on global revenue. Reducing readmissions requires investment in: executive and clinical leadership, data analytics, information technology tools, training, and staff and new services.

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Communicating with patients, caregivers and the public

This transformation will require that you engage patients and families, their caregivers and the public. Often, the “secret sauce” of successful readmissions reduction initiatives is the degree to which patients and caregivers understand that we now see an unplanned return to acute care as avoidable, something we will work with them to prevent where safe and appropriate. Transparency, communication and active engagement will be crucial. This could start with an announcement of readmissions reduction efforts in local media, or a recurring column about improving care transitions in the hospital's newsletter. A sample press release is in the Appendix.