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Genacross Lutheran Services: Leveraging Data Analytics and Partnerships to Improve Care Coordination and Address Social Needs

Introduction

Genacross Lutheran Services supports individuals of all ages in northwest Ohio and southeastern Michigan.

Genacross operates as a continuing care retirement community (CCRC) with independent living, assisted living, and skilled nursing care.[1] Additionally, Genacross serves families and youth through residential and community-based treatment, as well as by providing educational services, mental health services, and day treatment services.[2] Initially founded in 1860 to serve orphaned children and youth in northern Ohio, the organization today also aims to address key social needs, such as affordable housing.

It operates 12 housing sites across Ohio and Michigan, serving residents 62 years or older and those 18 years or older with disabilities.[3] In 2023, Genacross generated approximately $42.2 million in revenue, with 75% of that revenue coming from payor reimbursement for services and the remainder coming from rental income, investments, federal grants and other contributions.

Additionally, in 2023, the 372 members of Genacross's staff and their 343 volunteers served roughly 1,700 individuals.[4]

Genacross Connect

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, through their membership in Lutheran Services in America (LSA), Genacross participated in LSA's Results Innovation Lab, an active learning cohort designed for LSA members' leadership to transform the policy and practice of social services, thereby improving the care that children and families receive.

Genacross leadership also worked with leaders of 11 other LSA member organizations to develop an innovative model to improve service coordination for older adults while identifying and addressing clients' key needs like housing and transportation.[5]

The model, originally called LSA Senior Connect, utilizes data collected through screening and allows providers to coordinate preventive care management for identified needs rather than respond reactively to emergent medical conditions. Genacross was the first LSA member to pilot the model, and through the renamed Genacross Connect model, the organization targeted Medicare beneficiaries to avoid hospital readmissions.

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Genacross has permanently adopted the model and employs licensed practical nurses and social workers across all of its site settings, including its affordable housing sites and CCRC settings. These staff leverage tailored evidence-based screening tools to identify patient needs and then guide care management decisions.

> Genacross staff coordinate care both pre- and post-discharge for up to 120 days to ensure that patients are managing readmission risks and receiving the right treatments and care in the most appropriate setting.

The organization's summary reports, differentiated across care settings, diligently identify key trends in patient care, including readmissions and service coordination gaps, to support staff training, reporting accuracy, and improved care coordination. Genacross has found that such improvements can enhance patient outcomes and reduce readmissions and position the organization for value-based contracting opportunities.

As many of their residents are dual-eligible Medicaid and Medicare beneficiaries, Genacross sought partnerships with Medicaid managed care organizations (MCOs) in Ohio to support this work.

MCOs were interested in partnerships and wanted to see data demonstrating program effectiveness before formally participating in a value-based payment arrangement. Consequently, Genacross and its Lutheran partners developed evidence-based screening tools and internal data analytic capabilities to track program effectiveness with the hopes of one day using data to partner with Medicaid MCOs.

Collaboration between Genacross and MCOs in programs, including in Genacross Connect, is further complicated by the fact that Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs)—that is, organizations that coordinate local services and supports for older adults and people with disabilities in their communities, 12 of which are formally funded by the Ohio Department of Aging[6]— have historically been the primary partners of MCOs serving Medicare-eligible populations in Ohio. Even for dual-eligibles, being served under Ohio's integrated care delivery system, MyOhio, managed care plans are required to contract with AAAs, although they are not prohibited from contracting with other entities as well.[7] Genacross recognizes that efforts to work with this population require understanding local complexities to avoid duplication of services.

> Rather to provide value to existing efforts, Genacross has talked with several MCOs about integrating their services into AAAs and is trying to proactively partner with AAAs to leverage Genacross Connect's service and data infrastructure.

Partnerships

While Genacross continues to explore partnerships to fully implement Genacross Connect for older adults, the organization is also leveraging separate partnerships to improve outcomes for other populations as well.

The organization is part of Radiant Alliance, which includes Genacross, Ohio's Hospice, and UnitedChurch Homes.[8]

Radiant Alliance aims to build scale and market presence across the entire state of Ohio, to negotiate value-based payment arrangements more effectively, share data platforms, and coordinate programming across the member organizations. While each organization maintains its independence and individual payment streams, Radiant Alliance serves as a collaborative vehicle to enhance care coordination, expand service and alternative payment models, and explore new opportunities such as youth-focused programming.

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In November 2024, the Radiant Alliance, finalized a strategic affiliation agreement with CareSource, an MCO in Ohio. CareSource is focused on programming targeting social needs and collecting data to evaluate the impact of this programming.[9]

It is interested in three main areas:

1. Population health management of CareSource enrollees and how they can reduce the cost of care and improve outcomes

2. Helping get MCO enrollees into transitional housing; and

3. Programming for youth who would benefit from HRSN care coordination activities.

Through this affiliation, Genacross and other members of the Radiant Alliance remain separate legal entities but have additional access to CareSource's financial and organizational resources while benefiting CareSource by agreeing to serve their members.[10]

Finally, as of September, Genacross and the Link-age Group have joined together to launch a new company, named CareAxis, to deliver enhanced care coordination services to seniors living in affordable housing and continuing care retirement communities.[11] By utilizing AI-driven software and in-house data analytics, leveraged from Genacross Connect, CareAxis aims to automate and streamline workflows, thereby reducing administrative burdens and empowering care teams to deliver more efficient and personalized care. Genacross expects that the new CareAxis venture will launch in early 2026 and believes that integrating enhanced technology in this space will yield transformative outcomes.

Conclusion

Genacross Connect offers a creative and innovative approach to utilizing predictive analytics and screening tools to provide comprehensive and integrated services for patients across the age spectrum, serving enrollees of MCOs.

The organization has also established strong partnerships through Radiant Alliance and now CareAxis to create innovative data-sharing platforms and to leverage shared resources, enabling collaboration on new models and value-based payment arrangements to enhance care.

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Endnotes

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