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Advancing Tech-Enabled Health and Home Care

Development of a Systems Approach to Bridge Gaps and Bolster Equity

Both policy and systems changes can contribute to the development of an ecosystem that integrates health and home care—where the optimal arrangement of care is facilitated by technology and enables people to live well in the place they call home, even when facing health challenges. To build a systems approach that bridges gaps and bolsters equity, stakeholders will need to work together to align existing programs and design new ones, develop best practices to support caregivers, and implement approaches to promote equitable access to tech-enabled care.

87%

of **senior housing providers** expected their organizations to increase their technology budgets in 2021.

Bridging Gaps in Alternative Care Settings

There is a gap in virtual-care integration for alternative sites of care, namely, senior housing settings, where many of these integrated care models can be tested **at scale**. Congregate communities have fallen far behind in terms of both digital capabilities and the development of age-friendly buildings. As the guardrails for virtual care are developed for the traditional home setting, it remains a high priority that the regulatory structures also account for senior housing sites.

Concurrent priorities tailored for alternative care settings include the following:

- Supporting new technology platforms serving older adults with complex care needs in senior housing sites through investment and partnership models.
- Expanding **Medicare and Medicaid coverage** of telehealth services in nursing facilities and resources for technology adoption.
- Preserving telehealth flexibilities that remove originating site restrictions, documenting the specialized need and potential for their application within senior housing sites, and offering technical assistance to ensure equitable access across diverse populations.

Promoting Equity and Access to Open-Source Data-Sharing

Tech-enabled care coordination suffers from decentralized information exchange among caregivers, clinicians, specialists, and nonmedical home-care providers. This information discontinuity puts older patients at higher risk of adverse health events, including medication errors, infections, and—ultimately—hospitalizations or use of emergency services.

The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) has made important strides in the past decade, and the **Trusted Exchange Framework and Common Agreement**, released in January 2022, constitutes a groundbreaking policy shift to hold stakeholders accountable for measurable progress. Still, home-care integration amid broader data-sharing goals in this discussion is lacking, and adherence to national interoperability standards will vary across the continuum of care because **participation is voluntary**.

Because these federal standards became effective in 2022, recommendations for larger-scale adjustments to the ambitious open-source vision would be preemptive without an evaluation period. But strategies can be considered to further align efforts between home-care providers and traditional health-care settings, including:

- Expanding interoperability requirements to ensure that providers are aware of the home-based services provided to a given person or patient.
- Investing in the development of **application programming interfaces** for home care and community-based providers that integrate with certified electronic health records to improve continuity of data exchange among hospitals, payers, and interdisciplinary care teams.
- Bolstering collaborative data practices for longitudinal management across care teams. In particular, governance of and expectations for clinical integration could be more specific for home and community-based providers and caregivers as part of care planning, including role-based access to technology platforms.

For additional information, see the full **Advancing Tech-Enabled Health and Home Care report**, which presents consensus-built, actionable recommendations to integrate health and home care through technology. Recommendations are based on informational interviews, a survey, and a roundtable with experts across sectors.

ONC's Open-Source Vision

Furthering its aim to promote modern health IT for all stakeholders, ONC issued its **Final Rule** with respect to interoperability requirements to **foster** “innovation in health care to deliver better information, more conveniently, to patients and their providers.”

