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TA marketplace

CASE STUDY

Improving Non-Native English-Speaking Cambridge Health Alliance Members' Engagement with Cambridge Health Alliance Care Centers and Hospitals

ACO: Cambridge Health Alliance

Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA) is a health system in Boston's metro-north region. CHA, in Partnership with Tufts Health Public Plans, is a MassHealth ACO.

TA Vendor: Archipelago Strategies Group

Archipelago Strategies Group (ASG) provides marketing, advertising, public relations, communications, and community outreach to organizations.

Project Description:

ASG conducted community outreach, focus groups and phone surveys with CHA's non-native English-speaking members to learn more about how to better engage and serve this population. They also sought to better understand the community's perspective on CHA and provide information about CHA's services to encourage their continued engagement in their healthcare.

TA Project Timeline: June-December 2019



Identified Challenge

CHA has a Patient Activation team that engages eligible members in care. Prior to starting work with ASG, the Patient Activation team determined that non-native English-speaking members were less engaged in care. CHA sought TA support to conduct focus groups and phone surveys with these members to identify more effective ways of engaging them in care. The members CHA targeted for outreach tend to be harder to reach and engage in care due to frequent movement between their countries of origin and Massachusetts, as well as frequent movement among addresses within Massachusetts. Linguistic barriers, in addition to transience, compound the challenge of effective engagement in care.

Background

Prior to engaging ASG for this project, CHA identified challenges with engaging non-native English-speaking members. Through a previous TA project, ASG worked with CHA on research that concluded most of CHA's non-English-speaking members were low-income and faced significant health barriers compared to the population at large. CHA's Patient Activation Team was working on strategies to address these issues, which included a future goal of engaging more deeply with non-native English speakers to better understand their barriers to care.

TA Project Objectives

CHA sought TA from ASG to recruit participants, facilitate, and synthesize data from focus groups and phone surveys. Through these activities, ASG identified key words and phrases to include in outreach materials and communication strategies that would lead to patient activation to enter care, either by coming into a care location directly or calling an office to learn more about care options.

TA Project Development

CHA identified ASG as a TA Vendor based on ASG's experience working with non-native English-speaking populations in the Boston area. CHA and ASG met weekly during the planning phase of the project. Key leaders from CHA attended these meetings, including the Director of ACO Regulatory Compliance & Program Initiatives, the Senior Director of Healthcare Product and Services Marketing, and the Chief Compliance Officer.



One value of a focus group is that you learn about things that you aren't directly asking about. We were asking members about better ways to engage with us, and the response...was, 'We don't know who you are! I go to this doctor at this health center, so why am I being sent to Everett for surgery?' Getting people to understand [who their providers are and how they are connected to each other] makes a difference for people.

— CHA TA project team member

TA Activities

ASG completed three main TA activities with CHA as part of this TA project:

- 1 Recruited focus group participants within CHA's service area.** ASG conducted research to learn more about the demographics, socioeconomic factors, and healthcare needs of CHA's members. Based on the results of this research, ASG created outreach materials and recruited individuals from the Latino community in Chelsea and the Brazilian community in Everett to participate in a focus group.
- 2 Facilitated two focus groups, one in Spanish and one in Portuguese, and conducted phone surveys with CHA members.** ASG created discussion guides and facilitated two virtual focus groups with approximately 20 CHA members. Members were given gift cards for participating. As a follow-up activity, ASG conducted phone surveys with members who were not able to attend the focus groups.
- 3 Produced a final report for CHA.** Based on the data from focus groups and phone surveys, ASG produced a final report including data on member awareness of CHA's services, what information they were missing about the organization, and ways to better mobilize members to engage in their care. For example, ASG recommended that CHA engage their providers in conversations to better understand how linguistic misunderstandings might occur between providers and non-English-speaking members.

Outcomes and Global Impact:

The main outcomes of ASG's work with CHA included 1) increased awareness by CHA staff (particularly the marketing and communications departments) about specific strategies to better mobilize non-English speaking members; 2) increased awareness by CHA staff of how non-English speaking members understand CHA, allowing opportunities to resolve potential confusion and provide clarity; and 3) ideas for continued work on patient engagement using TA Card dollars.

The marketing and communications department learned valuable strategies for outreach, including ensuring that CHA outreach materials use consistent language that is easy to understand. CHA incorporated these strategies and insights into their member-facing materials, website, and social media channels. Finally,

ASG's work with CHA provided a jumping-off point for continued patient engagement work, such conducting additional focus groups with more non-native English-speaking members to supplement current findings.

Examples of Findings from Focus Groups

CHA should use the term "doctor" instead of "primary care provider" because the former is more universally understood across cultures. ASG also noted it is important for CHA to clarify that insurance covers the cost of many medical visits, with no out-of-pocket costs to members.