Understanding the Role of the Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO) in Your Area

The following information is part 1 of a 3-part series on understanding the role of the Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO) in your area.

Overview
The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) contract with Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organizations (QIN-QIOs) to improve the quality of healthcare and improve health outcomes attained by Medicare beneficiaries enrolled in Original Fee for Service Medicare (Part A and Part B). QIN-QIOs engage in local quality improvement initiatives to address potential areas of improvement. They work directly with hospitals, health systems, and providers to initiate and support health care quality improvement activities targeting Medicare beneficiaries.

Background:
The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has a network of contractors called Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs) that seek to improve the quality of care for Medicare beneficiaries in a defined geographic region. The QIO program is one of the largest federal programs dedicated to improving health quality for Medicare beneficiaries. QIOs are required under Sections 1152-1154 of the Social Security Act.

In 2014, CMS established a new functional structure for the Quality Improvement Organization program, which includes 14 Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organizations (QIN-QIOs). Each QIN-QIO serves a region of two to a maximum of six states and territories. This is a significant change in the administration of the QIO program. Prior to this change, each individual state had a different quality improvement organization. Since each state had a different QIO, there was no requirement for collaboration or coordination of quality initiatives between states. The new regional approach requires the implementation of quality program initiatives across the defined contracted region for the QIN-QIO.

Note: The QIN-QIO program is specifically for beneficiaries enrolled in Original Fee for Service Medicare. Beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare Part C (Medicare Advantage plans) are not targeted by QIN-QIO initiatives. Therefore, if your program or service targets a Medicare Part C (Medicare Advantage) population, this tip sheet may not be useful to you.
Finding Your QIN-QIO:
1. First, access the CMS website dedicated to providing information regarding the QIN-QIOs:


The following screenshot shows the CMS webpage that is accessed using the link above:
2. Once at the webpage, look under “Related Links” and click on “QIO Directory”.

3. When you click on that link, you will be directed to the Quality Net webpage. Click on the link “Quality Innovation Network (QIN) QIOs”, as shown below:
4. When you click on the link you will be directed to a webpage that provides a directory of QIN-QIOs. Using the dropdown menu, select the specific state or territory that you desire information about:

5. You will be directed to a list of QIN-QIOs. The name of the QIN-QIO is listed first. The second line lists the specific states and/or territories that the QIN-QIO is contracted with CMS to target.

6. Once you identify the QIN-QIO that services your area, click on the link to that specific QIN-QIO. Once at the webpage of the QIN-QIO, you will find information about contact information, office locations, and current quality improvement initiatives:

Example: Maryland

a. The 2014 QIN-QIO directory for Maryland sends you to a QIN-QIO by the name of “VHQC”. Click on the VHQC link.
b. Once at the VHQC webpage, click on “Contact” at the top of the page.
c. Clicking on the “Contact” link will provide the current list of office and phone contact information for the QIN-QIO: