

Primary Care Extension Programs

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) established a new grant program for implementation in 2011 to fund the establishment of a Primary Care Extension Programs under the Agency for Health Research & Quality (AHRQ). This program is based on the model of the Agricultural Extension Service that has been provided through state and federal efforts for many years. This grant program, while authorized in the ACA, has not been appropriated any funding within the federal budget for FY2012.

What are the requirements of Primary Care Extension Programs funded by these grants?

These Primary Care Extension Programs are required to (1) assist primary care clinicians to implement a Patient-Centered Medical Home; (2) develop and support primary care learning communities; (3) participate in a national network of Primary Care Extension Program hubs to develop a process to share best practices; and (4) develop a plan for financial sustainability after the initial six-year period of funding under this section is completed.

What specific types of support and education are provided to primary care practices under this program and how is that provided?

The program, through local community-based “health extension agents” supports and educates primary care physicians and other healthcare professionals about preventive medicine, health promotion, chronic disease management, mental health services, and the delivery of evidence-based therapies. Furthermore, these agents assist primary care practices in implementing quality improvement or system redesign that incorporates the principles of the patient-centered medical home, provide guidance to patients in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways, and link practices to diverse health system resources.

How does this program affect my practice and my patients?

The Extension Program, in those state or multistate regions awarded these grants, is intended to provide a trusted source of information and technical support to facilitate the transformation of your practice to deliver patient-centered care consistent with the medical home model.

What are the requirements to apply for this grant and how is this program funded?

Until Congress enacts legislation to provide funding for the program, no grants will be awarded. As of December 2012, no funds have been appropriated for this program. If and when funding is approved, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services shall award competitive grants to States for the establishment of a State or multistate level Primary Care Extension Program. A State or multistate applicant must minimally include the State health department, the entity responsible for administering the State Medicaid program, the State-level entity administering the Medicare program, and the departments of 1 or more health professions schools in the State that train providers in primary care. Two types of grants will be awarded:

- A 6 year grant to State or multistate entities that submit a fully-developed plan for the implementation of the Primary Care Extension Program.
- A 2 year planning grant to State or multistate entities with the goal of developing a plan.

Grants are authorized to be appropriated \$120,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2011 and 2012, and such sums as may be necessary to carry out this section for each of fiscal years 2013 through 2014. However, such

authorization levels in the ACA do not actually provide funding for the program; Congress must still enact an appropriations bill to provide funding up to the maximum amount authorized by the ACA.