

Call for Applications

Learning Opportunity: Community Oral Health Transformation (COrHT) Initiative in North Carolina

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation, in partnership with the North Carolina Oral Health Collaborative and CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, seeks to identify participants in a learning community of up to 14 dental clinics to support the advancement of prevention-focused, value-based, whole-person oral health care in North Carolina.

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Application Deadline: June 2, 2022, by 5:00 p.m. EDT

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This opportunity has been developed in partnership between Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation (Blue Cross NC Foundation), the North Carolina Oral Health Collaborative (NCOHC), and CareQuest Institute for Oral Health (CareQuest Institute) with the support of a Design Team. Over the Initiative's duration, NCOHC will serve as the primary contact for participants and the convener of any activities. CareQuest Institute will provide financial support for participating private practices and technical support to all participants, including real-time analytics to support learning, quality improvement, and impact. Blue Cross NC Foundation will provide financial support to participating safety net practices and the overall Initiative.

Participating clinics are eligible for a \$20,000 sponsorship to support their participation in learning and improvement activities and up to \$12,000 to facilitate ongoing reporting. In addition, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations and local health department clinics will be eligible for small "innovation grants" (\$25,000-\$50,000) to support the implementation of practices associated with the three-domain framework described below.

This document describes the purpose of this Initiative, eligibility criteria, related funding opportunities, and the process of submitting an application using a web-based form. Additional organizational materials will be requested for a subset of finalist applicants during the second stage of the process.

Note: () denotes a key term defined at the end of the document for shared understanding.*

Community Oral Health Transformation (COrHT) Initiative in North Carolina

Background

Dentistry is undergoing rapid change — the impacts of COVID-19 and the emergence and adoption of new care delivery models have elevated opportunities to fundamentally re-orient the oral health care system for better value and greater equity. Under the current system, misallocations of both workforce and care have led to, and deepened, inequities in oral health care access and outcomes, particularly among rural and low-income populations and other historically marginalized groups. Innovations in preventive, non-surgical treatment have been found to lead to better outcomes, improve patient experience, and lower cost, yet there are many barriers to uptake.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to new incentives to innovate — among providers and payers alike. This learning opportunity builds upon this momentum for change, focusing its efforts on elements of a [three-domain framework](#) emphasizing:

1. Tele-prevention (teledentistry)
2. Minimally Invasive Care (non-surgical treatment of disease)
3. Integrated and Personalized Care

These practices are also associated with a shift to value-based care,* value-based payments,* and the ongoing structural re-orientation of the care delivery model. Specifically, these domains utilize evidence-based care strategies to help patients improve their health, reduce the effects and incidence of chronic disease, and live healthier lives.

The COrHT Initiative in North Carolina will provide technical and financial support for participating dental clinics — primarily from the safety net — to adopt clinical and operational practices that reflect the three-domain framework. CareQuest Institute will provide technical and data expertise related to the three domains, and NCOHC will convene participants to help identify and act on systems-level barriers to promote more widespread adoption of these practices.

Overview of Learning Opportunity and Funding Available

This learning opportunity aims to develop and support a network of clinical and administrative leaders to implement evidence-based improvements to their care delivery and administrative models focused on teledentistry, minimally invasive care, and integrated and personalized care. These changes are designed to advance an oral health care system that prioritizes prevention, is value-based, and promotes whole-person oral health care. The learning collaborative activities will be oriented to support the increased adoption of practices reflected in the three-domain framework.

Key activities will include:

Learning Community: Over the course of one (1) year, starting in July 2022, representatives of participating clinics will convene twice in person, quarterly via remote video conference, and monthly via virtual engagements to support peer-to-peer collaboration and shared learning. These training and learning activities will support participants' continued engagement with the three-domain framework, and provide opportunities to share best practices, engage in shared leadership development and learning, and promote peer-to-peer collaboration. **Sponsorships of \$20,000 per clinic** are available to offset the costs of participation in learning and quality improvement activities. For those clinics that are 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations or local health departments, small **innovation grants (\$25,000-\$50,000)** will be available by application to support the implementation of new approaches consistent with the three-domain framework.

Quality Improvement and Data Analytics: Starting in September 2022, and continuing through October 2023, participating clinics, with technical support from CareQuest Institute, will collect and monitor monthly clinical and financial data critical to support quality improvement as a part of a value-based payment model. Qualitative data will also be collected to evaluate practice and patient experience, utilizing real-time data and storytelling from both provider and consumer communities. This data will be analyzed by CareQuest Institute and reported back to the group and/or individual sites. Coaching and office hour sessions will be made available to participants to assist with change management and promote a shared understanding of the data. **Up to \$12,000 per clinic** will be available to participating clinics to offset the costs of regular reporting.

Impact Report and Sustainability Planning: The quantitative and qualitative data collected during the project will inform NCOHC's efforts to identify and advance systems-level policy change supporting value-based care in North Carolina. In particular, NCOHC will work with participating clinics to identify areas of opportunity and impact, as well as specific barriers to engaging in the three domains. Overall project impact will also spotlight innovations achieved in North Carolina to inform other states interested in adopting value-based models of care that are inclusive of oral health.

Overarching Goals

The long-term goal of the COrHT Initiative in North Carolina is to support the shift to value in oral health care. Although there are many definitions of value, in general, value is achieved when providers, payers, patients, and policy align to attain high-quality, meaningfully accessible, and whole-person care for sustainable health outcomes in a cost-effective manner.

Throughout the Initiative, participating clinics will be asked to provide process, clinical, and financial metrics that relate to the three domains — tele-prevention (teledentistry), minimally invasive care, and integrated and personalized care. This data will help track progress toward initiative goals and highlight the impact of the adoption of these practices at the clinic level, as well as any specific policy or other barriers to adoption. Participating clinics will be asked to provide data that relates to:

- **Adoption of new operational practices** — e.g., staffing, employee compensation, practice management, and medical-dental collaboration.
- **Financial performance** — e.g., billing, revenue, the total cost of care.

- **Change in clinical services and quality measures** — e.g., increased preventive treatments, teledentistry visits, reduction in surgical treatments, recall periodicity, caries at recall.
- **Provider and staff experience.**
- **Consumer experience.**
- **Access to care.**

Clinics will use their baseline data (collected from participating sites starting in the summer of 2022) to set improvement goals within the domains with technical assistance and support from CareQuest Institute. These activities will help identify barriers to, and facilitators of, value-based practices and demonstrate how clinical practice patterns can impact cost and patient experience while promoting accessibility, equity, and integration. Blue Cross NC Foundation, CareQuest Institute, and NCOHC will utilize data and analytics to identify and understand best practices to further disseminate and increase the adoption of the most effective approaches.

Planned Activities and Funding

- **Participation Support:** A sponsorship of \$20,000 per clinic is available to support the participation of clinical and administrative staff in learning and quality improvement activities, including face-to-face activities and virtual convenings, ongoing coaching, data collection, and quality and practice improvement activities. Planned activities include but are not limited to education and technical assistance related to:
 - Principles of value-based care and value-based payment.
 - Integrated, interprofessional practice.
 - Addressing the social drivers of health (e.g., care coordination).
 - Patient and population risk stratification.
 - Data collection, reporting, and analysis, supported by an equity framework that will be developed with participating sites.

Participants are expected to attend two face-to-face convenings, monthly virtual sessions for peer-to-peer and other learning, and quarterly virtual convenings. Staffing requirements are described below. Any face-to-face activities will be convened according to the Foundation for Health Leadership and Innovation’s protocols with respect to COVID-19.

- **Innovation Grants:** Small grants will be available to support expenses such as technology and equipment upgrades or portions of staff positions that directly support innovation and the implementation of the three-domain framework. Innovation grants up to \$50,000 per clinic will be available by application for local health departments and 501(c)(3) nonprofit clinics.
- **Reporting:** Participating clinics will receive payment for submitting regular reporting. To reflect the importance of data and analysis in care transformation, simulate the experience of value-based contracting, and evaluate the effect of implementing new care models on health outcomes, an incentive structure will be tied to reporting. The design is intended to mimic a fee-for-service (FFS) + incentive alternative payment model (APM). Participants can earn incentive dollars for the timeliness and quality of reported data (pay-for-reporting). This includes financial performance analyses and reporting. The incentive dollars will tie to performance goals for timeliness, accuracy, and completeness of data submission, with an emphasis on demographic data reporting. This data is essential for equitable care delivery. Participating clinics will also submit data to evaluate and inform

improvement in metrics that relate to the three domains — tele-prevention (teledentistry), minimally invasive care, and integrated and personalized care. Data reporting, evaluation of quality performance, and allocation of incentive dollars will occur at regular intervals communicated to all participants.

Technical support for the data extraction process will be available to all participants from CareQuest Institute to ensure they are equipped with tools and processes that establish and maintain a data generation and transfer mechanism.

Eligibility Criteria

This opportunity is specifically designed for safety-net clinics (up to 12 will be included) with an established dental practice and a limited number of private practices (up to two will be included). All participating clinics must have a minimum payer mix of 15% Medicaid.

Additional eligibility considerations:

- A local health department, community-based nonprofit organization that is exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or private practice with a payer mix of 15 % or greater Medicaid.
- A minimum of three operatories.
- Provide comprehensive care.
- Use of Electronic Health Record (EHR) – preferred EHRs are: Open Dental, Eaglesoft, Epic, and Dentrix.

In addition to basic eligibility, the following areas are also considered critical success factors:

- Alignment among leadership, providers, and staff concerning continuous learning and clinical and administrative improvement.
- The ability to engage two to three individuals who will serve as the Site Implementation Team — attending the virtual and face-to-face sessions and providing leadership on a day-to-day basis at the clinic to implement new practices.
- Staff buy-in (clinical and administrative).
- Commitment to interdisciplinary practice (e.g., partnership with primary care/behavioral health).

Project Staffing Requirements

The COrHT Initiative in North Carolina will require each participating clinic to establish a two to three person **“Site Implementation Team,”** including the dental director or a lead dentist. These individuals must have capacity for:

- Attendance at two (2) in-person sessions.
- Two to three hours per month for scheduled activities, including community calls, coaching, and office hour sessions.
- Two to three hours per month to test and implement change management strategies.
- Two hours per month for data collection and reporting.

For continuity, all members of the Site Implementation Team are strongly encouraged to attend all sessions; however, one member will be designated the project “lead,” and this member must consistently participate in all scheduled activities. For purposes of shared leadership, staff development, and team engagement,

other team members are strongly encouraged to participate over the course of the Initiative based on their availability.

As part of the Site Implementation Team, each participating clinic will designate a **COrHT “Data Manager”** who may or may not be part of the Site Implementation Team. This person will be responsible for project data collection and reporting and serve as the point of contact for data-related activities including working with staff at CareQuest Institute to extract and transfer data as part of project deliverables.

Funding Partnership

As a partner in this work, in addition to providing funding support, the Blue Cross NC Foundation is committed to:

- Engage in thought partnership with participants and partners, focusing on listening for increased understanding.
- Support participants to achieve their goals and adapt to new and perhaps unexpected circumstances.
- Solicit and be open to direct, constructive feedback about our approach to, and implementation of, this project and specific opportunities for continuous improvement.
- Provide open and regular communication about any changes or updates that might impact participants.
- Operate consistently with our organizational values: authenticity, collaboration, curiosity, equity, health, and leadership.

How to Apply

Part 1: All applicants will [submit an application online](#) unless an alternative submission arrangement is needed. Please note, you must complete and submit the survey in one sitting. We recommend you review the question list and answer the questions in a word document and then copy and paste your answers into the survey itself when you are ready to submit. You will not receive a copy of your survey responses.

Application Questions: Application questions should be responded to via the online application above. To facilitate planning and collaboration, a printed version of the [application questions](#) is available. These questions serve several purposes, including helping determine participant selection as well as informing the approach to technical assistance and evaluation.

Part 2: A subset of applicants will be invited to move forward in the application process which includes providing more complete organizational information through Blue Cross NC Foundation (safety net) or Care Quest Institute (private practice).

Timeline:

Deadline or Activity	Date(s)
Funding opportunity opens	May 3, 2022
Applicant webinar (will be recorded)	May 10, 2022, 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Proposal submissions due	June 2, 2022, 5:00 p.m.
Applicant decisions	June 26, 2022
Virtual kick-off	July 15, 2022, 10:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.

Application Review

Applications from eligible organizations will be reviewed by staff from CareQuest Institute, NCOHC, Blue Cross NC Foundation, and members of the Initiative’s Design Team, with particular attention to:

- Clinical and operational readiness.
- Alignment in philosophy and desire for system improvement.
- Leadership and staff buy-in.
- Diversity of the participant cohort (e.g., by geography, clinic type, patient mix).

Learn More

Webinar

- A webinar will be hosted on **May 10, 2022, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** to discuss the opportunity and answer prospective applicants' questions. [Register for the webinar.](#)

Questions

- Potential applicants are invited to submit questions about the Initiative to NCOHC. Written responses to Frequently Asked Questions will be [posted in real-time](#).
- For questions about Blue Cross NC Foundation’s role or funding, please contact Daijah Davis at Daijah.Davis@bcbsncfoundation.org
- For questions about the application submission process, please contact Lasindra Webb at Lasindra.Webb@bcbsncfoundation.org

Appendix: Key Terms

Value-Based Care is a health care delivery model in which providers are compensated for caring for a population and rewarded for improving patient health while reducing costs of care. Value-based care places the patient at the center of the health care experience.

Value-Based Payment is a broad set of performance-based strategies that link financial incentives to a provider’s performance on a set of defined quality and cost measures. Think of payment as an enabler to value-based care.

About the Foundation

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation is a private, charitable foundation established as an independent entity by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina in 2000. Over the past two decades, the organization has worked with — and supported — nonprofit organizations, government entities, and community partnerships across the state, investing \$178 million into North Carolina through more than 1,200 grants. Within its focus areas of early childhood, healthy communities, healthy food, and oral health, the Foundation strives to address the key drivers of health, taking a flexible approach designed to meet identified needs in partnership with the community. Learn more at bcbsncfoundation.org.

About CareQuest Institute for Oral Health

CareQuest Institute for Oral Health® is a national nonprofit championing a more equitable future where every person can reach their full potential through excellent health. CareQuest Institute does this through its work in grantmaking, research, health improvement programs, policy and advocacy, and education as well as its leadership in dental benefits and innovation advancements. CareQuest Institute collaborates with thought leaders, health care providers, patients, and local, state, and federal stakeholders, to accelerate oral health care transformation and create a system designed for everyone. To learn more, visit carequest.org and follow the organization on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).

About the North Carolina Oral Health Collaborative

The [North Carolina Oral Health Collaborative](#), a program of the [Foundation for Health Leadership & Innovation](#), works to advance systems-level change, improving all North Carolinians’ overall health and well-being by increasing access and equity in oral health care. NCOHC seeks to influence policy, and through collaboration, listening, and knowledge-sharing, provide maximum impact in achieving optimal oral health care for all North Carolina communities. To learn more, visit oralhealthnc.org and follow NCOHC on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Facebook](#).

About the Design Team

A diverse group of oral health care stakeholders, the Design Team is responsible for advising on the development of the COrHT Initiative in North Carolina, including but not limited to: the overall design of the learning opportunity; participant selection guidelines; funding and financial support; and evaluation and reporting design. NCOHC, CareQuest Institute, and Blue Cross NC Foundation wish to thank the following Design Team members for their participation: Mark Casey, DDS, MPH; Katrina Mattison Chalwe, DDS; Lauria Davis RDH; Elly Steel, DMD, MPH; Rhonda Stephens, DDS, MPH; Amanda Stroud, DMD; Kaylan Safranski, MSW; Tim Wright, DDS, MS.