

County MEAC Development Project  
Short Report 4/9/19



**COLORADO**  
Department of Health Care  
Policy & Financing

# Introduction

The purpose of the Member Experience Advisory Council (MEAC) is to help the State and Counties use a person-centered approach (as defined on the next page) to engage members, their families and caregivers who are not usually given an opportunity to share their experiences or give feedback. MEAC is a way for members, their families and caretakers to work collaboratively with the County to identify and implement person-centered practices that improve member experience.

The Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) created MEACs for Colorado’s Medicaid Programs’ – Health First Colorado and Child Health Plan *Plus* (CHP+) – members to get involved and share their experiences and opinions about health care issues and health care legislation. This is a proven process and we are excited to be expanding the application to drive additional improvements. HCPF provided funding and technical assistance to Adams and Lake Counties to help those counties start their own county-level MEAC to focus on improving County processes and services related to Health First Colorado.



## County Members Engaged:

**15** | Adams County Members

**6** | Adams County Meetings

**6** | Lake County Members

**6** | Lake County Meetings

# Person-Centered Approach

## Definition of Person-Centered Approach

A person-centered and collaborative approach is a mutually beneficial partnership that contributes to carrying out the organization's mission. It's a process that ensures everyone is heard, roles are clear, and decision-making is transparent. The insights and perspectives of members are vitally important to the County, so it's important that we not assume what members need and instead *ask* members what they need.

County agencies need to balance competing demands while delivering services that meet Members' needs in the ways Member expect. To balance these competing demands, Adams and Lake County Human Services are embracing a person-centered approach by engaging Members to help improve processes and services.



### Additional Information:

The Counties are engaging stakeholders in way that is ADA compliant and accessible. The Counties ensure meeting materials and engagement are accessible:

- To comply with the ADA, documents posted online, including, but not limited to, Adobe PDF files, Microsoft Word documents, Microsoft PowerPoint presentations are screen-reader friendly.
- For meetings reasonable accommodations are granted upon request.

### Person-Centered Approach:

- 1 Ask Members for their input, feedback, suggestions on topics that impact their lives
- 2 Involve Members in improving the end-user experience
- 3 Use Member ideas, input, feedback, suggestions to improve processes and services
- 4 Share “Why” you are unable to use Member ideas, input, feedback (i.e. Statutes, Regulations or Funding restrictions)





## Success Story - Lake County

Lake County meetings consistently occurred on the first Thursday of the month from 5:30-7:30 at Colorado Mountain College campus. This relationship has proved durable and very helpful, given the ability to reserve rooms and have support services for technology, logistical and other support. Although 2 meetings were rescheduled due to winter storms that paralyzed the county operations, participation stayed strong for a core cadre of 3 members.

The team has produced a draft “one-pager” highlighting the key rights and responsibilities that have not been well understood by the Spanish-speaking members. The team has translated this into Spanish to highlight the key elements and focus on getting updated income, eligibility criteria as well as communicating the role that fraud can play in eroding the financial resources of the program.



# Lessons learned in the first six months

## Applicable to all County MEACs:

- ✓ Allow 3 months for Counties to handle administrative tasks related to setup (i.e. figuring out funding, reimbursements for mileage, transportation, etc.) and allow time for recruitment of Members and translators (if needed)
- ✓ Have an initial 1-hour orientation meeting to inform new Members about the MEAC purpose, roles, responsibilities, expectations and ground rules
- ✓ Establish clear guidance for guests regarding their role, responsibility, expectations, reimbursements, etc.
- ✓ Have Members help clarify what they see as the difference between sharing their experience with Health First Colorado in the County and asking specific, personal case questions
- ✓ Keep membership to County residents and only invite guests when there is a specific reason (i.e. guest is presenting on a specific topic)
- ✓ Let the Members decide the best date, time and location for meetings and then work to accommodate
- ✓ Establish contingency plans for bad weather

## Adams County

- ✓ Have all internal processes resolved and known prior to starting a MEAC or other Member meeting
- ✓ Provide information using multiple communication channels - do not rely on an announcement at a meeting or meetings notes to be the sole source of information
- ✓ Establish clear criteria, and use that criteria, for who can participate in MEAC or other Member meetings
- ✓ Guests: be very clear about their role and your expectations regarding their participation
- ✓ Foster practices with both Members and staff that help them share their frustrations in a an appropriate way - one that is not negative, demeaning or bullying
- ✓ Establish and share policies for addressing individuals who become negative, demeaning or bullying

## Lake County

- ✓ Maintain a fixed schedule for the meetings. Weather caused rescheduling and did not result in as much participation as the regularly scheduled dates.
- ✓ Utilize multiple communication channels, including in-person, postcards, email alerts and Facebook. All channels should be used on a consistent basis.
- ✓ Maintain the interpreter role, even if it requires additional costs. Many individuals do not speak English sufficiently-well to participate in a meaningful way. Develop a backup Spanish-speaker inside the Human Services Department.

# Recommendations for Overcoming Unique and Shared Challenges for County MEACs



## Plan:

- Before starting a new MEAC, or other Member meeting, have all internal processes (i.e. reimbursements) and supply and food ordering figured out
- Share information with Members about reimbursement and other meeting processes that impact Members upfront, through multiple communication channels and multiple times - don't rely on a single meeting or email
- Preparing for the MEAC meetings is critical. Counties need to continue to:
  - Focus on topics that are within the control of the County (not the State) for example, County forms, web content, communications, processes and services
  - Define what a successful session is, in terms of goals/outcomes, clear objectives and expectations
  - Determine how much time is required for the session and allotted prep time (e.g. room setup) and wrap up time (documentation time)
  - Obtain necessary materials (e.g. flip charts, markers, projector, etc.)
  - Create and distribute an agenda, confirm calendar invitations and other relevant materials
  - Handle other logistics (i.e. food, beverages, interpreters, etc.)
- Develop a plan for addressing issues with MEAC Members or guests (i.e. who are rude or bullying) and consider establishing time limits or an exit strategy for ending participation in the MEAC to rotate in new Members

## Engage:

Implement a person-centered approach within your organization and engage employees in making changes that improve the Member experience. You should provide training on person-centeredness and process improvement to all employees, especially those who engage directly with Members.

## Measure:

Identify ways to measure the impact the MEAC is having (i.e. member satisfaction, reduction in complaints, etc.). Establish a process for monitoring the measures as a means of sustaining improvements and identifying new areas for improvement.

## Partner:

Members are your best source of feedback on your communications, forms, processes and services. Find out what they want by both asking and partnering with them. Give Members a role in the decision-making process, within stated constraints.

# County MEAC Outcomes

## Adams County

- Meetings were held consistently every third Tuesday of each month
- 2/3 of topics raised by Members were addressed in MEAC meetings
- Meetings will continue through the end of this State Fiscal Year, and the County is looking for funding to continue the MEAC beyond June 2019
- Staff learned open, honest communication is a key component of a person-centered approach
- Staff learned the importance of **asking** Members questions to better understand challenges associated with Adams County services, forms, etc.
- The County is considering using training and/or coaching to educate additional staff in the use of a person-centered approach, process improvement and facilitation
- The MEAC is expanding to include other programs, like adult financial services and food assistance, so that a person-centered approach can be used holistically and not segmented which is supported by the requests from Members and from the Member survey results

## Lake County

- County DHS staff practiced person-centered approaches with six (6) separate members of Health First Colorado over six (6) months and six (6) meetings
- County DHS staff appreciated value of structuring conversations about their services in a neutral setting
- Developed a panel approach to translating complex documents and terminology, including comparing state guides and county documentation
- Agreed to expand the interview process to include a “one-pager” focused on individual members rights and responsibilities, including fraud prevention and reporting
- Lake County is continuing the MEAC process but expanding to include other services such as food and economic assistance



Produced by Government Performance Solutions (GPS), Inc. for  
Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing

March 2019

Kate Newberg, Principal Consultant  
[kate@governmentperformance.us](mailto:kate@governmentperformance.us)

Brian Pool, Managing Partner  
[brian@governmentperformance.us](mailto:brian@governmentperformance.us)