

Social Care Networks: Connecting Health and Community Needs



By Esther Conteh, APRN, MSN, PCC, VP Care Management, VNS Health Health Plans, February 24th, 2026

Good health is more than doctor visits; it's about those moments that make us feel safe and supported, like having groceries in the kitchen, a place to call home, or a ride to an appointment. Without the essentials, staying healthy can feel impossible. Older adults are especially vulnerable. Over half of New York seniors struggle to access [food](#) and [transportation](#), particularly in rural areas. These gaps can worsen chronic conditions and lead to preventable hospitalizations.

That's why New York State is taking new, meaningful steps to assist. Through [Social Care Networks \(SCNs\)](#), a new component of the NYS Medicaid program, people enrolled in Medicaid can connect with local support without having to search on their own. Regional Social Care Networks, such as the [Western New York Integrated Care Collaborative](#) (WNYICC), connect individuals and families with essential community-based resources that address social determinants of health, including housing, employment, food, and transportation.

“By helping Western New Yorkers thrive, our network enhances the community through integrated care that combines community-based supports and medical providers,” said Nikki Kmicinski, Chief Executive Officer of WNYICC.

For example, SCNs can connect people with food programs, housing supports, transportation services, and more. SCNs bring together local organizations, health centers, health plans, and providers to create a coordinated network that aims to address the root causes of health disparities before they escalate into a crisis.

Across the region, community organizations, nonprofits, health providers, and community-based health plans like [VNS Health](#) are collaborating to strengthen the safety net and help the community live with greater dignity, stability, and hope.

For more information, visit wnyscn.org or contact your healthcare provider for details on eligibility and how to register for screening.

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