

5 Home Health CEOs Tease Plans, Priorities For 2023



Joyce Famakinwa, Oct 15, 2022

The end of the year tends to light a fire under those looking to bring their organization's goals to fruition.

Thus is the case for some of home health's top leaders during the last three months of the year.

In the remaining months of 2022, leaders across home health care are focusing on addressing the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) pending payment rule, rolling out new programs to enhance care delivery, staff continuity and more.

To learn more about what providers have in store, Home Health Care News asked five CEOs to break down their plans for the rest of the year, and how achieving these goals would move their organizations forward.

Better Life Home Health – Alivia Care's home health arm – is focusing in two areas right now. One is a better payer mix, meaning fewer insurance cases and more Medicare and VA.

The other is improving the patient and family experience by having the same staff consistently involved with the patient and family during their care; and rolling out more care-focused programs to align with the specific needs of patients being referred to us from the acute care setting.

For the patient and family experience, we are moving away from a transactional focus on the patient's injury, illness, or disease, and looking at how we can – to the extent possible – make sure the same staff are consistently involved with the same patients. Creating that consistency will help improve trust, and we believe it will enable us to serve as a guide as the patient and their family moves through the episode of care, which should have an impact on readmissions as well. We are especially focusing on making sure we include the family and very actively solicit and reflect the patient's goals, concerns and needs both as we start care and throughout the time we are providing care. We are using a texting tool to allow patients and their caregivers to provide us with more timely feedback so we can make adjustments and meet expectations. We very much believe that consumers are more educated and empowered and expect to be more involved in their care delivery and decisions, and will favor agencies that understand this. It's how we are addressing rising consumerism in health care and hopefully improving the patient and caregiver experience.

We are also developing, and plan to roll out, the first of our care-focused programs, which will address cardiac care and cardiac rehab and will focus on outcomes for specific patient types. This is the first of many care focused or specialty care programs that we intend to develop and deploy in our service area. We believe that having a clinically specific program that is tailored to the unique needs of the patient will allow us to improve outcomes and will help those who made the referral, such as the hospital and physician, to know that we can deliver good results for their patients.

— Susan Ponder-Stansel, President and CEO of Alivia Care Inc.

One of Jet Health's goals is to continue to focus on our clinicians as a key driver of the company's success. We have significantly invested in recruiting initiatives to attract skilled members to our team. In addition to the flexibility many home health and hospice providers offer, Jet Health encourages continued skill development through clinical ladder advancement opportunities, program specialization and technology utilization, all designed to enhance care delivery and satisfaction amongst our professionals. Optimizing staffing at each of the company's agencies, coupled with the appropriate specialty skills, will allow the organization to best service the communities in which we operate.

Another goal is to expand the use of technology to supplement our existing care delivery model. The utilization of technology — such as remote patient monitoring — allows our clinicians to be alerted of subtle status changes amongst our patient base between in-person visits, so we can address these, thereby mitigating the possibility of significant concerns arising. Televisits can quickly be arranged after triage has addressed any needs and then interventions can be implemented. We believe this approach will lead to reduced hospitalizations, better-informed patients, enhanced communication and improved overall outcomes.

Achieving these initiatives will afford Jet Health clinicians and professionals the necessary tools and arm them with ability to provide care to higher-acuity patients in the home environment, and better position them to meet the complex and challenging demands of an ever-evolving health care delivery system.

— Stacie Bratcher, CEO at Jet Health

Externally, AccentCare is focused on the policy issues our community is facing. Getting legislative or regulatory relief from the proposed home health cuts is a huge priority for us. We share community concerns about the methodology CMS is utilizing to interpret Congressional intent on PDGM budget neutrality, and think a delay is reasonable and necessary to ensure patient access to home health services. If CMS doesn't pull back the payment reduction portion of the proposed rule, every effort will be made to support our Congressional home health champions efforts to include the [Preserving Access to Home Health Act](#) in the must-pass, end-of-year package.

Internally, AccentCare remains focused on the employee experience, and that will continue for the balance of 2022 and beyond. After listening to our people, we're doubling down on the culture we're striving for around reimagining care together. A part of that is responding to the need for a greater understanding of the communities we serve. By the end of the year, over 300 leaders across AccentCare will have completed a rigorous 10-week course on intrinsic inclusion, a process spearheaded by our chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer. We'll be rolling out that training to more of our staff next year and will also continue a process of building sustainable DEI efforts into our community outreach plans. We see tremendous upside in increasing access to communities who have historically been underserved by home care organizations.

— Stephan Rodgers, CEO at AccentCare

An important focus for VNS Health is to continue working with the federal government and CMS, as well as our industry colleagues, to reverse the 7.69% multi-year Medicare payment cut to home health care set to start in 2023. Using our own data, we've been able to quantify the impact these cuts would have on providers already struggling with workforce shortages, making it even harder for them to keep up with the growing demand for home health care, particularly in underserved communities. Our efforts are now aimed at convincing the Biden Administration to remove the cuts from the final rule, set to be issued by November 1, and working with stakeholders on a reimbursement policy that meets providers' needs.

Another key goal for VNS Health is to market and sell services to external health care organizations through our professional solutions group. We've used our experience in managing care for the highest-risk, medically complex members in our own health plan to create a solution for one external health plan and we see the opportunity for other customers to benefit as well. We are bringing to market our evidence-based HELPS tasking tool, which uses algorithms to assess personal care needs, and we are actively involved in assisting other organizations in administering the Medicare hospice benefit. We believe these endeavors will move both VNS Health and our industry forward.

— Dan Savitt, President and CEO of VNS Health

Visiting Nurse's focus for Q4 is completing targeted projects to prepare for the Home Health Value-Based Purchasing Model and the pending rate cuts. We have made major gains in our nursing staff and clinical practice, ensuring our people are prepared to deliver quality service in the new rate environment. By achieving these goals, we will be better positioned to remain competitive in the current health care landscape.

— Dorothy M. Davis, President and CEO of Visiting Nurse Health System

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