

Overview: The New CMS QIO Program

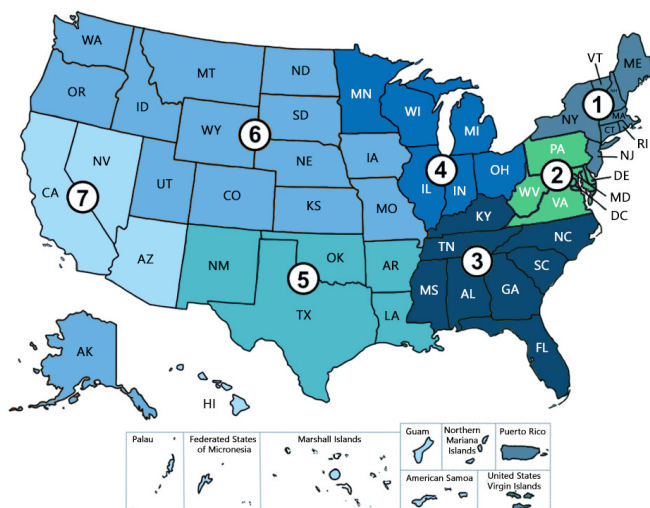
Health care delivery is nothing like it was in 2019. Neither is the QIO Program.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has revealed its vision for the Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) 13th Statement of Work that begins in June 2025. Informed by extensive input from stakeholder organizations and front-line providers, CMS has rebuilt the QIO Program from the ground up, marking the largest transformation of the program in nearly 30 years.

Key elements of the transformed QIO Program include:

1. *Seven geographical regions* that conform to the ten federal regions
2. One contract, held by *one Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO) in each region*, that includes quality improvement support for hospitals, nursing homes and outpatient clinicians
3. *A unique, non-duplicative QIN-QIO role* in each state, based on a thorough assessment of the quality improvement landscape and dialogue with stakeholder organizations
4. *Opportunities to partner more closely with QIN-QIOs*, funded by CMS to complement existing improvement initiatives, coordinate siloed initiatives conducted by multiple entities and fill gaps in the improvement landscape
5. *Greater ability to customize provider services* and deliver hands-on technical and implementation assistance
6. *Help with operational challenges*, such as workforce shortages, workplace violence prevention, emergency preparedness planning, supply chain management, drug shortages, cybersecurity, interoperability and building quality improvement infrastructure
7. *Ready response to urgent quality challenges* based on the approach CMS and QIN-QIOs used to assist nursing homes in the early stages of the pandemic, which saved 7,000 lives

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One QIN-QIO per state for all settings of care	Several hospital QI contractors per state
Stakeholder input on the QIN-QIO role	CMS defines QIN-QIO role
Integration with other QI efforts	Separation from other QI efforts
Hands-on help, including onsite	Primarily virtual assistance
Includes provider QI priorities	Focus only on CMS QI priorities



Southeast
CMS QIN-QIO



Provider-centered, hands-on improvement services that strengthen capacity and build resilience.

In the first year of the five-year program, QIN-QIOs scan the health quality landscape and identify a unique, non-duplicative role in each state they serve. CMS identifies the providers eligible for QIO services, who typically demonstrate performance challenges and serve populations adversely affected by health inequities and lack access to improvement resources. QIN-QIOs engage providers, assess their needs and help develop individualized quality action plans, with flexibility to address needs that fall outside the 13th SOW Aims (see box at right). QIN-QIOs deliver hands-on assistance supporting goal attainment in years two through five, within the context of their state-specific role.

QIO Program Aims



Opportunities for extending the reach and impact of quality initiatives.

Under the transformed QIO Program, QIN-QIOs will complement and coordinate existing improvement initiatives. Where no such efforts exist, the QIN-QIO may create a new initiative. This opens the door to:



Scale up initiatives to include more providers, locations or settings of care.



Expand the scope of initiatives to address other dimensions of improvement opportunities or test additional evidence-based interventions.



Access bandwidth to deliver more intensive services, such as individualized technical assistance.



Fill capacity gaps, such as a need for data analyses or subject matter expertise in areas like health equity, patient and family engagement and workforce strategies.



Address provider needs in CMS priority areas where no improvement initiatives exist.

Get to know Health Quality Innovators (HQI)

HQI served 27 states as a QIN-QIO and Hospital QI Contractor (HQC) located at the junction of CMS' new Southeast region. From the start of the QIO Program in the mid-1980's, we have partnered with stakeholder organizations to meet local provider and patient needs. We have years of experience helping providers apply improvement methodologies, implement interventions and achieve goals. HQI consultants come from every care setting and hold QI, clinical, public health, health IT or health care administrative credentials.

This material was prepared by Health Quality Innovators (HQI), a Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO) under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Views expressed in this material do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of CMS or HHS.

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