Infrastructure, clinical integration, and expert guidance required to form a successful and profitable ACO.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 directs the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to create a national voluntary program for Accountable Care Organizations (ACO) by January 2012. CMS released the guidelines for creating an ACO on March 31, 2011, and now healthcare executives are tasked with understanding the guidelines and planning the steps necessary to move their organization forward.

A typical ACO will act as a healthcare cooperative led by a group of physicians and providers, allied healthcare professionals, and one or more hospitals, all working together and responsible for the cost and quality of care delivered to a specific population of patients. Treatments will rely on evidence-based protocols and cost-effective preventive measures wherever possible. Reimbursement will be based on outcomes vs. fees for service. Furthermore, the ACO will rely on state-of-the-art electronic information and patient medical record systems.

An ACO is paid under both a traditional fee for service method and a share of the amount saved by the Medicare program as a result of the ACO’s efficient provision of medical services. The percentage share an ACO can earn in savings depends mainly on its performance scores on 65 quality metrics, which are categorized into five quality domains:

- Patient/Caregiver Experience (CAHPS)
- Care Coordination/Transitions (NQF and MU)
- Patient Safety (AHRQ PSI)
- Preventive Health (PQRI, NQF, EHR incentive)
- At Risk Populations (PQRI, NQF and EHR incentive)

The ACO will be eligible to share in savings only if the ACO meets the quality performance standards.

Complex IT Infrastructure Needed

Considerable technical assistance is needed to organize and implement an ACO. Some organizations will adopt an employed physician model. Others located in communities with independent medical groups who prefer not to be employed by a health system, will employ “clinical integration” principles to manage their ACO. While these organizations may include providers who all share a common employer, it is more likely that they will include independent groups with disparate IT systems.

An ACO must have an IT infrastructure that enables it to collect and evaluate data and provide feedback to ACO participants and ACO provider/suppliers across the entire ACO, including providing information to influence care at the point of care. Specific challenges include:

- Management of patient populations by chronic disease
- Updating disease registries with data from visits to providers outside of ACO
- Matching of patients from disparate systems
- Identification of high risk patients at beginning of contract period

ACO Guidelines

The ACO model promises a reduction in claim costs as a result of improved healthcare delivery and healthier patients. The participating providers will be responsible for demonstrating quality performance on clinical measures and will share in the savings of the Medicare expenditures if they come in below federally specified benchmarks. If successful, the ACO payers see a reduction in claims, the providers share in the savings, and the patients receive improved care. Payment based on outcomes achieved, rather than on volume of services provided, will be the motivation for providers to focus their attention on improving the underlying systems of care.
• Data accuracy which determines financial success of program
• Pay for Performance monitoring and incentive payment modules
• Aggressive timeline

An ideal IT infrastructure must be able to aggregate and analyze data from many disparate sources. Dell’s vision of the IT platform would look like this:

Dell’s Health Strategy – “In the Cloud”

Simplifies use with interoperability that creates a true “healthcare system”

End-to-End Deliverables
Dell Services ACO Consulting Service offers end-to-end assistance including planning, implementation, and post implementation training and support. Engagements include:

• Accountable Care or Clinical Integration IT Roadmap – review your organization’s IT infrastructure, including connectivity and interoperability, and deliver a tactical IT action plan and timeline for implementation. We address the need to aggregate data from a variety of sources across the continuum of care.

• Data Aggregation and Analysis Solution – leverage Dell’s considerable experience with remote hosting and support of various data aggregation and analysis vendors to benefit from an efficient SaaS delivered ACO solution.

• Integration, training, and Support for Clinical Integration – utilize the ACO development timeline for integration to ensure successful implementation of a clinical integration program. Dell’s experienced program managers and change management consultants ensure that the program stays on track. Our specialized solution architects will navigate around challenging integration roadblocks to deliver better data and reports to the providers.

Why Dell Services
The key to a successful ACO is its structure. Physicians must be properly enabled, empowered, and incented to manage their patients’ health by using best practice guidelines. With better clinical information, providers can make better decisions. And, with more accountability for their decision making, they can deliver better care for their patients.

The Dell Healthcare Services team supports nearly every large Electronic Medical Record vendor and more than 1000 hospitals with standard and custom IT solutions. Our team can help build the integration and analytical platform you will need to successfully manage the ACO. Our extensive experience with all the major Healthcare Information Systems can help you accomplish this in the most cost effective manner – using the best tools available in the market – employing both short-term and long term resolution services.

Dell Services ACO Consulting Services
Dell Services has the experience, tools, and methodologies to help providers develop a successful ACO. We are uniquely positioned to help our clients:

• Interdisciplinary ACO team
  Our team consists of physicians, nurses, former CFOs, Payer consultants, solution architects and change management professionals who together bring the depth of expertise needed to successfully implement an ACO or clinical integration program. Additionally, Dell can provide deep insight to how payers are interacting with ACOs, their strategies, analytics, and contracting provisions.

• Unique Vendor Partnerships
  We have developed extensive relationships with IT partners, for both providers and payers, and leverage these relationships to address the complicated IT infrastructure necessary to support ACOs or clinical integration programs. Our vendors bring a wealth of experience in the specific areas of data aggregation and analysis and are backed by Dell’s globally recognized leadership in hosting and integration support.

For more information about this or any of our service offerings, please contact your Dell representative or visit dell.com/healthcareconsulting.