



# HealthPartners and Allina Hospitals and Clinics

## Northwest Metro Alliance

The Northwest Metro Alliance is a long-term collaboration between Bloomington, Minnesota-based HealthPartners and Minneapolis-based Allina Hospitals and Clinics that is focused on achieving the “Triple Aim” of healthcare (high quality care, exceptional patient experience, and affordability) for more than 300,000 people receiving care from these organizations in the northwestern suburbs of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area.

The Northwest Metro Alliance seeks to improve the health of this population by targeting cost and care improvements for 27,000 HealthPartners commercial members, optimizing available network and specialty services, and by preventing duplication of capital or other outlays for patient care services. Ultimately, the Northwest Metro Alliance is designed to become a learning lab for an Accountable Care Organization (ACO), consistent with pilot approaches being explored locally and nationally.

### **The following services are covered by the Northwest Metro Alliance:**

- All inpatient and outpatient hospital services provided at Mercy;
- All primary, specialty and ancillary care services managed and provided by HealthPartners Medical Group clinics in Coon Rapids, Andover, Anoka, and Elk River, and Allina Medical Clinic sites in Champlin, Coon Rapids, Elk River, and Ramsey. More than 120 primary care physicians are involved in total.
- HealthPartners’ medical plan (1 million members), financing capabilities and services; and
- Collaborative care coordination activities and patient support throughout the continuum and across all sites of care.

## Comments about the Northwest Metro Alliance:

“This collaboration is the first of its kind in the Twin Cities,” said Ken Paulus, president and CEO of Allina Hospitals & Clinics. “We believe it will provide both of our organizations the opportunity to partner on innovations that will benefit the northwest metro community and help moderate rising health care costs.”

“Together with Allina we expect to achieve excellent results for the people we serve and demonstrate that high quality care and outstanding service can be more affordable, too,” said Mary Brainerd, HealthPartners President and CEO. “We will also use payment systems that reward providers for delivering value instead of volume – an approach we would like to see adopted nationally to combat rising health care costs.”



**Example:** Both HealthPartners and Allina participate as joint owners in Suburban Imaging, which has two outpatient imaging centers in the market (Coon Rapids and Maple Grove). These centers offer state-of-the-art services, a strong patient experience, and the opportunity for further affordability as compared to other more expensive imaging options. Joint use of these centers also helps reduce the risk of duplicative expenditures on high cost technology in the market.

## An integrated approach to patient care

Historically, lack of coordination and misalignment of incentives among healthcare providers (primary, specialty, hospital, and ancillary) have resulted in fragmented care for patients and has contributed to increases in the total cost of care. Models to integrate and make health care patient-centered have also struggled, as they reward healthcare providers primarily within their silos of care, i.e, physician offices, health systems, hospitals, nursing homes, etc. Northwest Metro Alliance participants, however, will work together to improve patient care across all sites in the community. These activities will span the care continuum, addressing all inpatient and outpatient care. This level of collaboration is expected to improve quality and experience outcomes, decrease total cost of care, and ultimately enhance the range of services available to the community.

### *Coordinated Care Management*

A critical component to achieving the Triple Aim goals of the special payer agreement is an enhancement of the connections between primary care clinics, hospitals, and associated payer services to deliver more coordinated care for patients with chronic conditions and to reduce admissions and readmissions. This includes identifying the high risk and high cost patients in the community, working to engage them in case management and other care services, and ultimately improving their self-management ability to avoid future readmissions. Overall, this approach is being built consistently with “health care home” concepts, with a strong focus on care coordination for management of chronic disease, as well as communication of external care plans across systems to ensure better overall care.

### *Payer based data models*

The Northwest Metro Alliance benefits from HealthPartners’ multiple population-health data models to understand the patient population, and to identify variation in treatment patterns and clinical practices. Using claims data that captures all expenditures for patients receiving health care, regardless of place of service, these modeling approaches effectively capture the majority of costs associated with treatment (including professional, facility inpatient and outpatient, pharmacy, lab, radiology, and other ancillary services). The HealthPartners measurement system includes methodologies for compiling incurred costs into indices for measuring the total cost of care (called Total Cost Index, or TCI), methodologies for adjusting population data based on illness burden (e.g., Adjusted Care Groups or ACGs), as well as condition-centered methodologies which track a patient over time such as Episode Treatment Groups (ETGs). Ultimately, these methodologies and other indices provide a comprehensive reflection of the total cost of care and healthcare treatment patterns in the community and market, covering providers, hospitals, and patients.

### *Electronic health information sharing*

A third key component of the Northwest Metro Alliance is the commitment to sharing electronic health information to coordinate care, improve efficiency and safety and improve the patient experience. This is accomplished initially through use of Epic’s “Care Everywhere” and other tools to provide read-only access to each organization’s electronic health record. Appropriate measurement to evaluate the impact of integrating these electronic medical records will be developed throughout the term of the agreement.

# Managing towards measurable outcomes

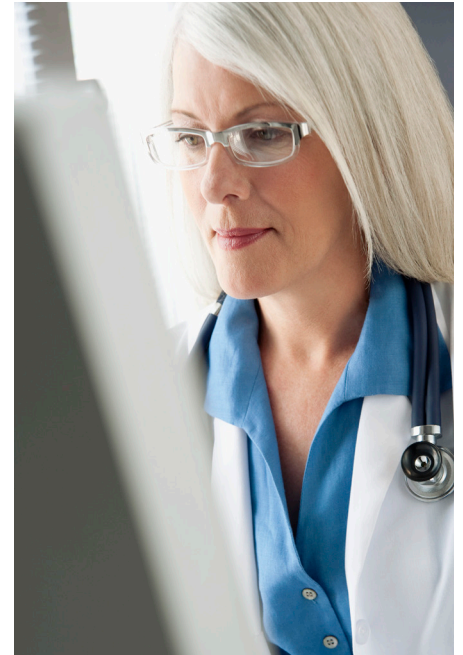
## ***A clinical and data-driven governance model***

The Northwest Metro Alliance is governed by a seven-year affiliation agreement, which outlines the relationship and overall terms of the partnership, a structure and process for joint planning and joint venture developments in the market, and an overall governance model. The affiliation agreement also describes appropriate dispute resolution processes, including escalation of key issues to the respective CEOs of each organization when appropriate.

Reflecting the complexities of building an alliance across two organizations to deliver on the Triple Aim, the affiliation agreement outlines a governance process that ensures participation by a broad and diverse group of clinical and operational leaders from both organizations. This group includes the chief medical officers and medical leadership from Mercy Hospital, medical directors from the Allina Medical Clinic and HealthPartners Medical Group clinics, measurement and analytics leaders, and other appropriate operational representatives. They meet monthly to review data and evaluate progress against goals, and to discuss how best to support and drive the cultural changes inherent in the goals of the Alliance. This model helps increase trust and understanding among all participants in the Alliance, and will help ensure effective and efficient decision-making throughout the seven years of the agreement.

## ***Special payer agreement and shared savings measurement***

The Northwest Metro Alliance will be measured by performance against the three goals of the Triple Aim – Total Cost of Care, Patient Experience, and Quality of Care - as outlined in a special payer agreement. Specifically, a model of withholds and incentives has been established; this model will return shared savings to all participants based on the success of the Northwest Metro Alliance in impacting these three components of the Triple Aim. This approach helps align clinical and improvement efforts towards these goals, thus helping improve overall health of the community in both the short and long term.



### **HealthPartners and Allina intend to manage towards the following Triple Aim-centered goals and strategies:**

- Evaluate opportunities for collaborative arrangements that will enhance the quality of, and access to, healthcare services in the area.
- Creation of shared tool kits and clinical best practice protocols and contracting models to facilitate the goals of value-based care.
- Development of standard performance metrics to manage population health and identify and track improvement opportunities.
- Collection of standardized data to facilitate comparisons across initiatives.
- Open and transparent communication of progress, result and best practices.
- An effective, continuous improvement model that provides input for future bundled payment models and population data management approaches.

## Initiatives

### ***Generic Prescribing***

Both Allina and HealthPartners' primary care groups intend to improve towards national levels of performance in prescribing of generics instead of brand name drugs, and have set corresponding goals for increasing these rates. The local cardiology specialist group (Metropolitan Heart and Vascular Institute) is also actively participating in this effort, in order to ensure that generics drugs are effectively prescribed for patients with heart conditions.

### ***Low Back Pain***

The Northwest Metro Alliance participants have set goals for implementing strategies and protocols to address low back pain, which is one of the top 10 most common medical conditions in the US, with a total yearly cost of more than \$86 billion to the health care system. These approaches will help ensure community consistency in messaging to patients, and will decrease the risk of exacerbation of low back pain injuries.

### ***Safe and effective inductions.***

Mercy Hospital and Allina Medical Clinic have begun innovative work to address safe and effective inductions of labor. The goals of this work are to reduce preventable birth trauma, enhance labor and delivery and perinatal organizational culture of safety scores, and to improve documentation and communication of care processes.



### ***Readmissions***

Mercy Hospital has begun a multi-year effort to address readmissions for heart failure. With its partners at Metropolitan Heart and Vascular Institute, the Mercy Heart Failure Clinic helps manage patients who are discharged from the hospital with heart failure, to ensure that they are able to stabilize and manage their condition once they return home, and aren't hospitalized again within a short time frame.

### ***Bronchitis***

Acute bronchitis is one of the most common conditions encountered in clinical practice and is a common cause of antibiotic overuse. One of the Northwest Metro Alliance initiatives is a joint project to reduce the percentage of adults 18 through 64 years of age with a diagnosis of acute bronchitis who are dispensed an antibiotic prescription. Both HealthPartners and Allina clinics are working to ensure that antibiotics are not prescribed unless in appropriate circumstances.

### ***Future Initiatives***

Going forward, the Northwest Metro alliance plans to continue and tie efforts to the population served by Mercy Hospital and Allina and HealthPartners clinics, through enhanced use of condition specific analyses and other data-based approaches for initiative targeting. Future projects, for example, will look at advancing the patient-centered medical home and the large and growing population of individuals with complex and chronic conditions. These efforts will set the foundation for other accountable care organization efforts by Allina and HealthPartners.

