

## What is practice change?

Practice change is a complex, collaborative, and generally interprofessional process that uses the best available evidence to generate sustainable improvements in health care and health in the case of the Change AGENTS Initiative, the health care and health of older adults and their families.

At its best, practice change engages older adults and families and/or other key stakeholders in the design and implementation of high value interventions, programs, services, practices, and innovations.

## What kind of work does practice change entail?

Practice change may include a wide variety of efforts. These range from highly targeted care improvements on a particular clinical unit or in a single clinic, care setting, or agency to larger scale changes such as the redesign of health and human service delivery systems, the diffusion of new interventions, or policy advocacy that informs or shapes how older adults' health care is paid for or delivered.



### Practice Change: As Defined and Approached by the Change AGENTS Initiative

*In 2013, there was no broadly accepted definition of "practice change" in the health services field or in the related literature.*

*The Change AGENTS Leadership Team developed the following working definition to help guide project activities and help others understand the work of the Change AGENTS Initiative.*

*Their thinking was influenced both by descriptions of related work found in the literature and by input from the Change AGENTS themselves through an online survey and at the Initiative's launch event in November 2013.*

More explicitly, the Change AGENTS Initiative worked in **six practice change domains** identified and defined by the Change AGENTS Leadership Team:

- 1. Transforming practice, care and services:** Adopting new models, measures, or improvements in the work of clinical units, care settings, social agencies or communities.
- 2. Redesigning delivery systems:** Making systemic improvements in care within and across organizations or networks.
- 3. Advancing public policy:** Conducting advocacy, seeking regulatory and reimbursement change, or using research to inform policy making at the federal, state, regional or local level.
- 4. Connecting health professions education and practice:** Reshaping pre and post degree education programs to include interprofessional, collaborative, geriatric, and gerontology informed concepts/approaches critical to providing better care, and to provide current practitioners with the tools and training needed to provide this kind of care.
- 5. Strengthening quality measures and tools:** Generating or advancing the use of tools and measures to enhance care.
- 6. Developing model programs:** Creating and testing new care models, interventions, and/or strategies designed to improve care and health.



## Where are changes in practice needed?

Changes in practice are needed in every setting across the continuum of care (from clinic to hospital to skilled nursing and other long term care environments), as well as in the community and home.

## What are the core attributes or principles that underlie the practice change we emphasize?

As noted above, practice change can include a broad range of work. The Change AGENTS Initiative will promote practice change efforts that:

- **Involve interprofessional collaboration** and utilize proven approaches to team care;
- Are informed or driven by evidence that may be developed with a variety of rigorous research methodologies;
- **Demonstrate geriatric and gerontological excellence**, that is, best practices and approaches that are informed by our field's unique understanding of the health and well-being of older adults and their families;
- **Involve partnerships across settings and with the community** and that lead to more integrated, coordinated care and high value services;
- **Advance person- and family-centered care** that honors and responds to what older adults and their families say they need and want from their health care; and
- **Promote equity and access** so that more, ultimately all, older adults and their families can obtain the high quality care they need.



## What kinds of skills are required to change practice or to be a Change AGENT?

Practice change requires a diverse set of skills and abilities, many of which are not taught formally in the preparation of health and human service professionals, administrators, and academic faculty. These fall into three broad areas:

### 1. Individual Communications

- Traditional and social media engagement
- Professional thought leadership
- Policy advocacy
- Consumer advocacy
- Grassroots organizing

### 2. Influencing Organizations and Care Systems

- Evaluating current practice
- Environmental and organizational assessment (including identifying and then addressing barriers to change)
- Developing a value proposition
- Stakeholder engagement and motivation
- Creating a business plan
- Interprofessional team building and management
- Conflict management
- Process evaluation and quality improvement
- Resource/partnership development

### 3. Engaging Stakeholders and Shaping Policy

- Messaging/framing/persuasion
- Presentations (slides and performance)
- Storytelling and visual communication (ability to use images and video)
- Facilitation
- Listening to and engaging groups of older adults and their families

