

The Ingredients for a Successful Influenza Campaign at a Skilled Nursing Facility

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INTRODUCTION

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) supports quality improvement efforts across health care settings and programs to maximize the impact on health care and value to taxpayers. Alliant Health Solutions is the contracted QIN-QIO working to support beneficiaries in North Carolina, with a focus on rural health and vulnerable populations. The organization provides technical assistance, education, and resources to approximately 340 nursing homes in the state.

Their work involves initiatives across the health care continuum to enhance care coordination, reduce readmissions and hospitalizations due to healthcare-acquired infections and adverse drug events, and increase immunization rates.

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

For this project, we selected a nursing home corporation comprising 12 facilities with a history of low influenza vaccination rates. To encourage improvement, the new chief nursing officer created a corporate challenge by offering cash prizes to high performers. Our goal was to improve influenza vaccination rates from last year's rates (22/23) by 10% over six months, from September 2023 to February 2024. Disclaimer of data: Data was based on CMS claims data for 22-23, and the 23-24 rate was self-reported by the facility.

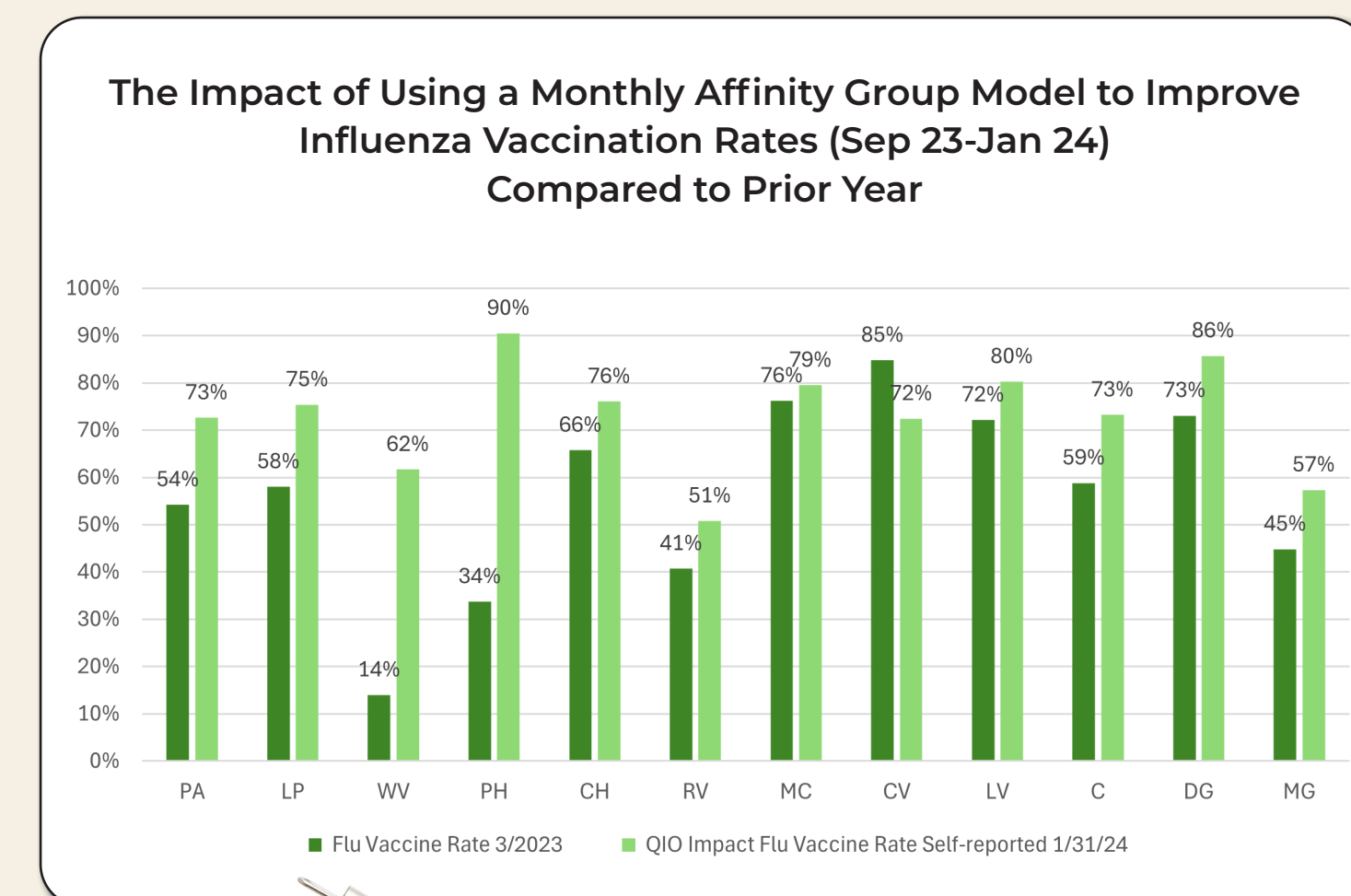
Integral to the initiative was the monthly engagement model, where facilities were invited to attend a forum (affinity group) to share vaccination rates, discuss challenges, and evaluate project progress. Alliant created various tools and resources, such as the Seasonal Vaccination Calendar, Immunization Toolkit, and Adults Need Shots Too resource. The Seasonal Vaccination Calendar was a timeline of action items to help facilities stay on track with their immunization campaign. Subject matter experts were invited to address motivation strategies based on the CDC model "Vaccinate with Confidence: SHARE." Furthermore, monthly virtual educational webinars were available for facilities to learn more about immunizations and infection prevention and control related to respiratory viruses from subject matter experts.

OUTCOME

Overall, the monthly sessions were well attended. Attendees asked questions about motivating residents who declined the vaccination. We discussed motivational techniques and encouraged using the medical director and resident council meetings to promote vaccination uptake. After each session, a summary of the presentation and resources were emailed to the attendees.

Preliminary data indicates that the majority of facilities have improved from last year.

During the flu vaccination campaign, 11 out of 12 facilities, or 92%, showed improvement. The average improvement rate among the facilities was 38%. The only facility that did not improve had a high vaccination rate of 85%. The campaign's success was mainly due to increased awareness of the importance of vaccinations and making them available to everyone. Monthly meetings, individual check-ins, and leadership support were found to be crucial in achieving the campaign's goals. The initiative underscores the importance of sustained efforts in promoting flu vaccinations, ultimately saving lives, reducing hospitalizations, and enhancing the overall quality of life for Medicare beneficiaries. See the graph for more information.



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10 out of 12

facilities used the Seasonal Campaign Calendar and found it helpful. 11 out of 12 facilities indicated they plan to use it next year.



When asked how they plan to sustain and improve their program next year, the facilities indicated they plan to:

- ✓ Plan a larger kick-off for the flu vaccination.
- ✓ Utilize the Seasonal Campaign Calendar.
- ✓ Utilize return visits to residents who decline vaccinations; include medical director if needed.
- ✓ Start earlier in the season to get consent from residents and families. Allow time for questions and concerns and share information on recent outbreaks and risk factors for our high-risk populations.
- ✓ Continue the friendly competition among the sister facilities.

Alliant has been great to work with. Our facilities met monthly as a group with Alliant, and the Alliant team was also available for individual consultation. Alliant provided education and helped our team think outside the box. We significantly improved our flu vaccinations from the prior year. We look forward to working on upcoming initiatives with the Alliant Team!"

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Dione Roal
Chief Clinical and Regulatory Officer
ALLIANCE HEALTH GROUP

SUMMARY

Using an affinity group to improve vaccination rates was proven to have a significant impact. According to the data, the average improvement rate among the facilities was 38%. As a recognition of their achievement, each facility was awarded a certificate of completion that they can proudly display. This success can be attributed to various factors, including leadership support, consultation from Alliant Health Solutions, and a monthly affinity group. Together, they created a highly successful influenza vaccination campaign.