



COLORADO

Department of Health Care  
Policy & Financing

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Denver, CO 80203

## New Program Uses Technology to Treat Chronic Pain in Primary Care Settings

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**DENVER, CO** – Colorado Medicaid’s [Accountable Care Collaborative](#) (ACC) is launching a cutting-edge care model that uses telehealth technology to help primary care medical providers treat chronic pain and reduce prescription painkiller abuse among Medicaid members. Modeled after the Project ECHO® programs developed by the University of New Mexico, the **Chronic Pain Disease Management Program** brings the expertise of pain management specialists into primary care settings with video conferences designed to help primary care medical providers manage the care of Medicaid members with chronic pain. More than 50 providers from 33 primary care clinic sites across Colorado, including medical providers, behavioral health providers and pharmacists, are participating as part of an integrated care team.

Using [HIPAA](#)-compliant video technology, the ACC’s Primary Care Medical Providers have access to a multi-disciplinary team of chronic pain specialists, including physicians, pharmacists, nurses and behavioral health professionals, who specialize in pain management and addiction to painkillers. The team reviews cases submitted by primary care providers and recommends evidence-based interventions for treating their patients. Each video conference also features a short lecture on specific topics concerning pain management and the use of opioids in treating chronic pain.

“This program supports the goals of Governor Hickenlooper and the Colorado Consortium for Drug Abuse Prevention by giving providers throughout the state better access to education and evidence-based strategies for preventing opioid addiction,” said Susan E. Birch, MBA, BSN, RN, executive director. “It uses health technology so primary care providers can practice at the top of their scope to make evidence-based treatment available to Medicaid members, particularly those in rural and frontier areas with limited access to specialists.”

The ACC, Medicaid’s main health care reform program, has implemented this program as part of its vision to provide person-centered and integrated care, so Medicaid members have the best possible health outcomes while the state controls costs. Telemedicine technologies are an important part of the ACC’s plan to create “medical neighborhoods” that can meet all of the health needs of members in each region of the state.

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The Chronic Pain Disease Management Program will give providers tools to improve the health of Medicaid members with chronic pain while preventing abuse of prescription painkillers. In addition to offering video conference clinical consultations between primary care doctors and pain management specialists, the program offers medical practices administrative strategies for working effectively with patients who have chronic pain. These strategies include appointment scheduling for ideal pain management, communication with pharmacies, and the use of technology for monitoring prescriptions.

The Department is currently working with the University of Colorado to develop other similar programs that use the Project ECHO® model to manage other diseases and conditions in the primary care setting.

**About the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing:** The Department administers the Medicaid and Child Health Plan *Plus* programs as well as a variety of other programs for low-income Coloradans who qualify. For more information about the department, please visit [Colorado.gov/hcpf](http://Colorado.gov/hcpf).

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