



The Critical Role of Communication in Accountable Care Organization Success

Since the Affordable Care Act was signed into law four years ago, the formation and growth of accountable care organizations (ACOs) has been closely tracked. According to an August 2013 [Leavitt Partners report](#), there are 488 ACOs in the U.S., 52 percent of which are Medicare ACOs.

The physicians, hospitals and other healthcare providers that make up an ACO have an important task: to work together to provide more efficient, higher-quality care for their patients while reducing costs. Data from the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#) shows initial cost savings results: provider groups involved in Medicare ACO programs have already saved a total of \$380 million.

For ACOs to be truly successful, they must seamlessly share information and also effectively communicate with patients. Since ACOs are providing coordinated care, it's critical that they have the resources to track and address the needs of a variety of patient types – from those with multiple healthcare needs to those that require less ongoing attention – and to report the results.

A contact center can play an important role as one of the primary patient touch points, communicating about preventive care, chronic condition management and scheduling appointments. These interactions result in improved communications between the patient and provider, and an increase in overall patient satisfaction, which will positively affect a plan's overall STAR rating. ACOs considering the services of a contact center should seek a partner with the following qualities:

- **Healthcare Expertise** – A contact center charged with serving an ACO must have significant experience in the healthcare industry, including previous experience with health and wellness member outreach and navigating managed care programs like Medicare Advantage.
- **Commitment to Compliance** – In this constantly evolving and regulation-heavy industry, contact centers operating in the healthcare space must be able to quickly adapt to and comply with all regulatory oversight and have an impeccable compliance record.
- **Agent Quality and Database Integration** – Delivering a personalized experience to members should be a key component of an ACO's contact center strategy. At the heart of this effort is having skilled contact center agents with access to each member's full history and needs via integrated data systems.

As the number of ACOs continues to increase, their success in coordinating care and reducing costs can be aided by a multichannel contact center that delivers an integrated approach to member communication and diligently reports measureable data and analytics in real-time. This will not only improve ROI, but also have a major impact on members' / patients' overall satisfaction.