MEDICAL SURGE AND THE ROLE OF ACCOUNTABLE CARE ORGANIZATIONS

About Accountable Care Organizations

• ACOs are groups of healthcare providers and facilities that come together to deliver high-quality, well-coordinated care to a set patient population.
• In 2018, more than 1,000 Medicare, Medicaid, and commercial insurer ACOs covered nearly 33 million beneficiaries in all 50 states.
• ACOs share in savings generated through efficient healthcare delivery and high performance on quality measures of patient/caregiver experience, care coordination/patient safety, preventive health, and at-risk population management.

Key Findings

• Variation in the composition of ACOs translates to variation in staffing, care setting, areas of expertise, resources, and ability to participate in emergency preparedness and response.
• Opportunities may exist to leverage ACO expertise in data analytics, patient education, and comprehensive case management to improve preparedness, particularly among highly vulnerable populations.
• ACO participants have capabilities such as telehealth that could assist community partners in the event of a medical surge incident.
• Disasters can threaten the business continuity of ACO participants, particularly independent practices.
• Those engaged in emergency preparedness activities do so irrespective of their participation in an ACO.

Methodology

• Convenience sample of medical directors, executive directors, presidents, administrative officers, board members, and similar Medicare ACO leaders.
• ASPR TRACIE analyzed data from five telephone interviews with Medicare ACO leaders.
• Topics included: the role of Medicare ACOs and their participants in different emergency response scenarios; capacities and capabilities; factors that challenge or facilitate their involvement in emergency preparedness and response; and lessons learned from real-life responses.
• Environmental scan suggested non-Medicare ACOs share similar experiences.

Opportunities to Improve Preparedness

• Raise awareness among community partners of the unique capabilities of ACOs, particularly in telehealth, case management, patient and provider education, and data analytics.
• Recognize the vulnerabilities of ACOs – especially those primarily composed of independent physician practices – during disasters and invest in business continuity planning to minimize disruptions in their operations.
• Provide education on legal and financial implications of ACO participants providing patient care during an emergency response.
• Increase awareness of tools, templates, and resources that can be used or adapted by ACOs to improve the preparedness of their participants.

RELATED RESOURCES

• Medical Surge and the Role of Accountable Care Organizations (full report)
• Engagement of ACOs in Medical Surge Activities
• Engaging Healthcare System Partners in Medical Surge Resource Page