2024 THA Leadership Fellows Capstone

The THA Leadership Fellows capstone project allows participants to apply principles and competencies of the Leadership Fellows program to current real world organizational issues, challenges or opportunities. THA Fellows' Capstone project works to enhance:

- Collaboration and relationship building;
- Critical thinking;
- Serving as a change agent in your organization;
- Strategizing for internal and external engagement;
- Providing and receiving constructive feedback from colleagues;
- Public speaking;
- Analysis of gaps or opportunities of continual organizational improvement; and
- The ability to synthesize complex information into simple and clear ideas.

Project Overview

The capstone project aims to reinforce the mission and purpose of the Fellows program: **to create change agents who drive improvement and innovation and have the confidence to be advocates on behalf of their hospital, community and the hospital industry.** Each member of the THA Leadership Fellows class will be required to identify an area of focused study, based on topics provided by THA, which addresses an issue, challenge or opportunity within the health care industry. Each Fellow will be placed within a workgroup based on similar interests.

One key outcome of the capstone project is to enhance one's ability to synthesize complex health care issues into easily understandable information for stakeholders and to develop the practice of advocating for specific policy issues.

The Fellows Capstone should:

- Address a topic from the policy list provided by THA.
- Identify gaps in current policies and initiatives and provide recommendations and actions to close gaps.
- Incorporate in the project principles and strategies discussed in the Fellows program.
- Provide data (quantitative or qualitative) to reinforce the need of addressing the issue/opportunity.
- Identify and address gaps in key areas of engagement and advocacy among local or state government or other leadership organizations in the community.
- Provide actionable steps to address or improve the specified topic/issue.

This year, THA will divide the 2024 cohort into five groups to work on one of the topic areas listed below.

Topics

Capstone projects should address a topic within one of the THA 2024 Interim Policy Priorities listed below:

Workforce Training - Study and identify impediments to educating and training new nurses. Consider the wage differential between clinical nurses and nurse preceptors. Preceptors are experienced licensed nurses and other clinicians who act as teachers and supervise nursing students during their clinical rotations. Their role is to help students translate theoretical learning to real-world clinical practice. These preceptors supplement part-time and full-time faculty members and are essential to training new nurses. Preceptors are needed for all levels of nursing education. The workgroup should consider state incentives to encourage more nurses to serve as preceptors to train the next generation of nurses.

Workforce Shortage - In 2023, 64% of hospitals were operating with fewer beds and reduced services due to workforce shortages. Study the totality of workforce shortages in the health care field, identify opportunities to alleviate allied health workforce shortages to meet the needs of Texas' rapidly growing population and identify key workforce positions needed.

Impact of Prior Authorization and Retrospective Denials - Misuse and overuse of prior authorization strains an already depleted healthcare workforce by pulling doctors and nurses away from patient care to justify their professional decision-making to insurance companies. Administrative expenses account for as much as 31% of total health care spending, with 82% of these expenses attributed to insurance and billing. The workgroup should study the impact of utilization review on the cost of health care, administrative burden and associated costs to providers and beneficiary access in their organizations; specifically, study the impact of prior authorization, concurrent reviews and retrospective denials.

Gaps in Behavioral Health Coverage Parity - While strides in parity have been made, barriers, such as overly stringent concurrent review standards and prior authorization requirements, still exist. Additionally, studies continue to show that reimbursement for mental health services lag behind reimbursement rates for acute care, creating financial strain for behavioral health providers. These administrative barriers unnecessarily hinder access to appropriate treatments. The workgroup should study the extent to which insurance plans have achieved mental health parity and analyze any gaps in the behavioral health continuum of care for Texans, as well as gaps in services for behavioral health care patients in the Medicaid program. Examining the behavioral health continuum and comparing the range of services available in the private sector and in the acute care setting, to those available in the public sector will highlight the gaps Texans are experiencing in their care.

Transparency Requirements for Insurance - Understanding the barriers to processing and paying health care claims is an important first step in the process of lowering the cost of health care. The workgroup should consider new transparency requirements for the commercial insurance market, such as requiring commercial health insurance companies to publicly disclose the percentage and value of initial denials, final denials, the percent of administrative denials versus non-administrative denials, average days to pay claims and aging accounts receivable (30 days, 90 days and over 180 days).

Throughout the THA Leadership Fellows Program participants will have the opportunity to consult with THA's advocacy, data and strategic communications staff as well as have access to THA papers and other resources as available.

Deliverables

The culmination of the capstone project will result in three deliverables due throughout the programs time frame:

- Testimony – Each program participant will participate in a mock legislative testimony, presenting a key component of their capstone subject.
- White paper – Each group will provide a white paper on their specified topic.
- Presentation – two to three projects will be selected for a presentation.

Additional details on these items are provided on the Timeline and Deliverables document.

Capstone Questions?

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