



Maryland  
Hospital Association

### **Sinai Embeds Care Coordinators in Emergency Room**

Sinai Hospital in Baltimore has taken an important step in its population health management efforts by securing an \$800,000 grant from the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission that will fund several emergency room care coordinators.

The coordinators, who will be embedded in the emergency department, but will also make home visits to patients and work with existing community resources, will connect high-utilization patients (Sinai has identified more than 200 patients who have visited the Emergency Department four or more times in the past four months) with external resources such as mental health and substance abuse programs, housing assistance, and transportation programs. In the initial rollout, the hospital recommended about 70 people for the voluntary program; 48 patients have enrolled.

By addressing these basic needs, Sinai expects to reduce both unnecessary emergency room visits and readmissions. The program, a partnership between Sinai and the nonprofit HealthCare Access Maryland, complements Sinai's existing medical care coordination efforts by focusing on non-medical needs and is based on a [care coordination program that worked to reduce unnecessary 911 emergency calls](#). The 911 program, Operation Care, reduced call volume by 32 percent in 12 weeks, according to the *Journal of Emergency Medicine*.

Care coordinators assess environmental issues that may hinder patients' ability to successfully manage their own health. For example, they help pregnant women obtain proper pre-natal care, but also help ensure pregnant women receive adequate nourishment to reduce the rate of babies born at low weights.

The principle at the heart of this effort, according to Sinai administrators, is that people can be healthy once they are outside of the hospital. Sinai CEO Amy Perry says the hospital has fully embraced the population health concepts that have been detailed in Maryland's Medicare waiver and through the global budget system via the Health Services Cost Review Commission.

The care coordination initiative supports three key goals of the hospital, Perry said. First, it helps medical staff provide the *right level* of care; second, it connects patients with the right resources to address primary and chronic needs; third, it helps build the infrastructure to help the community support itself.