

Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Utah Home Health Agencies Commit to Providing Higher Quality Care
*HealthInsight Quality Partners Program Designed to Improve Care, Reduce Hospitalizations,
and Improve Oral Medication Management for Patients*

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, April 18, 2006 – *HealthInsight*, the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) in Utah, announced today that 21 home health agencies are part of the *HealthInsight Quality Partners* Program. These agencies have committed to work closely with *HealthInsight* over the next three years to dramatically improve the quality of life and care for Utah’s home health care patients. QIOs throughout the nation will focus collaborative efforts on reducing avoidable hospitalizations for patients receiving home health care. The *HealthInsight Quality Partners* are a group of hospitals, nursing homes, and home health agencies that have pledged to improve the quality of health care in Utah.

It’s not an entirely new arena for QIOs, because *HealthInsight* and home health agencies are already working with hospitals, physicians, and managed care organizations to implement tools for improvement and providing education and resources to reduce hospitalizations and improve oral medication management. But as QIOs embark on achieving hospitalization goals, success would mean a reduction in more than 83,000 hospitalizations, which can mean significant savings of Medicare dollars.

HealthInsight is also working with home health agencies to improve team development among staff, increase the emphasis on patient-coordinated care, improve coordination of care, and build and strengthen leadership. In addition, *HealthInsight* is helping home health agencies explore how to use home telehealth—such as phone monitoring or telemonitoring of patients—to improve the quality of care provided.

“By working to reduce unnecessary hospitalizations and improve oral medication management, these home health agencies are improving the quality of patients’ lives in Utah and are helping to reduce healthcare costs in the long run,” said Marc Bennett, President and CEO of *HealthInsight*.

Gunnison Valley Home Health has made quality a top priority. Focusing on reducing the number of patients who have to be admitted to the hospital, the agency partnered with *HealthInsight* in 2005 to participate in a national study. By identifying and tracking patients who may be at risk for hospitalization, the agency began to incorporate specific interventions into patient care plans to address each risk factor. In addition, the agency is collaborating with hospital physicians to improve communication.

These efforts have paid off. Since the start of the initiative, Gunnison Valley Home Health has reduced the percentage of patients needing to be hospitalized by 7 percent. “Our quality of care is important to us. Working with *HealthInsight* keeps us focused as well as helping us apply the full process for quality improvement,” said Barbara Lund, Director of Gunnison Valley Home Health.

Quality of care measures for all home health agencies are tracked and reported publicly on the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' Home Health Compare website. To view Home Health Compare, visit <http://www.medicare.gov> and scroll down to select *Compare Home Health Agencies in Your Area* under Search Tools.

For more information on these or any of the quality improvement resources available at *HealthInsight*, contact Cher Edmonds at 801-892-6638 or cedmonds@healthinsight.org.

For more information about the programs available at Gunnison Valley Home Health, contact Barbara Lund at 435-528-2109.

To view a complete listing of all 21 home health agencies that are working with *HealthInsight*, visit www.healthinsight.org.

HealthInsight, the Quality Improvement Organization for Utah and Nevada, provides free assistance to hospitals, nursing homes, home health agencies, and physicians on quality improvement. The organization works with consumers to advocate for quality and to help them understand and to assure that they receive the quality health care they need. *HealthInsight* has been working with the federal Medicare program for over 30 years in Utah and for 18 years in Nevada.

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