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# Empowering Change: The Role of Community-Based Coaching in Health Care Transformation

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Implementation Spotlight

## Executive Summary

This implementation spotlight explores the role of community-based coaching to support transformative change. The spotlight is reinforced by an example of this approach from the [EQuIP-LA Initiative](#) and through the words of one of the program's coaches.

Research has consistently shown that practice coaching significantly improves the adoption of evidence-based guidelines in primary care settings.<sup>1</sup> For many years, CQC has supported a diverse group of health care organizations develop and implement a community-based approach to practice coaching.<sup>2</sup>

Community-based coaches (CBC) are quality improvement professionals with a deep understanding of a community's needs and resources, and often work within larger health care organizations such as health plans, independent physician associations (IPA) or management service organizations (MSO). CBCs serve as key facilitators of practice transformation and drive meaningful and sustainable improvements in patient care, particularly in underserved and complex care environments.

The power of a community-based approach lies in their ability to leverage localized insights about practices and communities to tailor improvement interventions to meet specific needs. Further, by being embedded within larger health care organizations, CBCs can connect practices and patients to shared resources and spread knowledge across a network of providers, bringing economies of scale to this type of coaching effort.<sup>3</sup>

### **Equity and Quality at Independent Practices in LA County (EQuIP-LA) Initiative:**

The EQuIP-LA Initiative (2023-2025) is supporting 31 independent primary care practices throughout Los Angeles County reduce disparities related to chronic conditions and preventative care. Conditions of focus include diabetes, hypertension and colorectal cancer. Practices provide care to over 50,000 Medi-Cal enrollees who predominately self-identify as Hispanic or Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

Practice quality improvement (QI) is facilitated by a network of community-based coaches working within one of four participating provider organizations, [Allied Pacific IPA](#), [Angeles IPA](#), [L.A. Care Direct Network](#) and [Omnicare Medical Group](#). Coaches receive ongoing training and tailored guidance from CQC's team of improvement advisors on the application of an [equity-centered QI framework](#).

## The Impact of Community-Based Coaching

Coaches in community-based settings work closely with health care teams to build internal capacity, overcome barriers and foster a culture of continuous improvement. Coaches help clinics navigate complex care challenges and offer tailored interventions that support each clinic's unique needs and patient population. This approach provides ongoing implementation support and can ensure that changes are sustained and scalable across various settings.

One of the most significant contributions of community-based coaching is the development of trust between coaches and clinical teams. Coaches often become the “ambassadors” of improvement initiatives, embodying the goals and values of practice-led change. This trust is crucial in environments where change can be met with resistance or uncertainty. Through consistent, personalized engagement, coaches help teams feel supported and empowered to take ownership of the improvement process.

Coaches are attuned to offering culturally relevant support to clinics. They have a unique ability to scan and assess practice culture, morale and staff bandwidth along with internal and external barriers to providing optimized primary care services, especially to underserved communities. This deep understanding allows them to adjust expectations and tailor their coaching approach.

## Community-Based Coaching in Practice

In EQUIP-LA, CBCs have leveraged their understanding of practice culture to help them advance capacity for equity-centered quality improvement,<sup>4</sup> leading to targeted interventions in chronic disease management and preventive screening. This community informed approach has shown promise in reducing disparities of care experienced by Medi-Cal enrollees of color in Los Angeles County. The impact of community-based coaching extends beyond individual practices, contributing to broader health system transformation by creating networks of high-performing primary care practices that can better serve their communities while respecting and working within diverse practice cultures.





### **Zayra O. Leal, Astrana Health**

Zayra O. Leal, is a Quality Care Improvement Specialist with Astrana Health, an MSO that provides infrastructure and administrative support to Allied Pacific IPA. As an integral part of EQUIP-LA, Zayra is one of almost a dozen CBCs supporting practices across Los Angeles. Below we share reflections on Zayra's coaching journey.

Zayra recollects how her own life experiences have informed her work within the health care system and her coaching philosophy.

*“My inspiration to pursue a career in quality improvement stems from seeing my parents struggle to find a doctor for their check ups and language barriers with their primary care provider. These experiences have shaped my coaching philosophy, emphasizing empathy, cultural competency and improving access to inclusive, accessible health care.”*

Reflecting on these experiences, Zayra has held various health care roles focused on connecting care teams and patients with essential resources. In her previous position as front office lead at a non-profit clinic, she recalls the following:

*“As front office lead, I ensured members were checked in for their appointments, assisted with translation, guided through the referral process, followed up on documentation and developed processes to help staff efficiently support members.”*

These experiences helped shape her perspective on the importance and value of tailoring practice support based on their needs and assets. Through her hands-on approach, Zayra builds trust with clinical teams, creating an environment where collaboration thrives. One prime example was the introduction to the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle, a method to implement, and subsequently scale, small tests of change.<sup>5</sup>

*“I’ve never worked with the PDSA framework before but using it has been beneficial for the clinics; they are now implementing change ideas that originated from this approach.”*

Her deep understanding of the unique needs of each clinic allows her to tailor interventions that foster ownership of improvement processes. Zayra is particularly skilled in helping teams overcome resistance to change by facilitating open dialogue, aligning team goals and creating actionable plans that lead to measurable improvements in patient outcomes.

*“Being able to provide resources and make a real difference is incredibly rewarding. Seeing the progress that clinics make, and knowing we’ve played a part in that success, is what makes this work so fulfilling.”*

By modeling collaborative problem-solving techniques, she empowers clinic staff to tackle challenges collectively, ensuring that improvements continue long after her direct involvement.

*“It takes a team to be able to see the progress. All the work the clinic is doing, from the doctor, back office, front office, billing, it’s a collective effort.”*

Her commitment to building resilient systems within the clinics she supports ensures that the positive changes fostered under EQUIP-LA will be both lasting and impactful.

## Conclusion

Community-based coaching is a powerful tool for health care quality improvement. By fostering trust, guiding evidence-based practice adoption and empowering clinical teams, coaches play an essential role in driving sustainable improvements in health care quality. The success of EQUIP-LA underscores the importance of continuing to invest in coaching as a strategy for equity-focused health care improvement across diverse settings.

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[calquality.org/initiative/equity-quality-improvement-los-angeles/](https://calquality.org/initiative/equity-quality-improvement-los-angeles/)

### About the California Quality Collaborative (CQC)

California Quality Collaborative (CQC), a program of the Purchaser Business Group on Health, is a health care improvement program dedicated to helping care teams gain the expertise, infrastructure and tools they need to advance care quality, be patient-centered, improve efficiency and thrive in today's rapidly changing environment. CQC is committed to advancing the quality and efficiency of the health care delivery system across all payers, and its multiple initiatives bring together providers, health plans, the state and purchasers to align goals and take action to improve the value of health care for Californians.

## Endnotes

- 1 Baskerville, N. B., Liddy, C., & Hogg, W. [Systematic review and meta-analysis of practice facilitation within primary care settings](#). *Annals of Family Medicine*, 10(1), 63-74, 2012
- 2 Armstorff D., Eubanks C., [Improvement Coaching: What Matters Most for Practice Transformation](#). California Quality Collaborative, 2019
- 3 [Lessons in Scaling Transformation: Impact of the California Quality Collaborative's Practice Transformation Initiative](#). California Quality Collaborative, 2020
- 4 Robertson P., Donohue, K., Lind E., [Approaches to Designing Equity-Centered Quality Improvement Projects](#). California Quality Collaborative, January 2025
- 5 [Plan-Do-Study-Act \(PDSA\) Worksheet](#). Institute for Healthcare Improvement

