Reflections from the 2024 State Healthcare IT Connect Summit

The 14th annual State Healthcare IT Connect Summit took place in early April, and KPMG attended as participants and session facilitators. Throughout the event, KPMG diligently listened for common themes, industry buzz, and valuable lessons learned. The Summit was well attended by state participants and vendor partners who engaged in thoughtful discussions on various health and human services (HHS) topics. Presented below are the key topics that consistently emerged during the Summit sessions.

Organizational change management

Several sessions emphasized the crucial role of organizational change management (OCM) in ensuring the success of HHS transformation projects. The speakers stressed that OCM goes beyond mere software testing at the conclusion of a project and should begin early on, recognizing that the audience and message will change over time. OCM should consider not only the end users of the transformed solution but also agency leadership, managed care organization (MCO) partners, providers, legislative resources, and other stakeholders. The OCM plan should be tailored to these different audiences, delivering a message and approach specific to their respective project roles.

Since HHS transformation projects often span multiple years, it is likely that project members, leaders, supporters, and stakeholders will change along the way. Therefore, an effective OCM plan should account for onboarding new team members and ensure that they fully understand the project's vision and value.

Additionally, the importance of culture in transformation projects was highlighted, emphasizing the need to integrate OCM considerations right from the beginning and maintain a firm vision while remaining flexible on implementation details. The ongoing impacts of OCM, including future support, organizational recruiting, and staff relations, should also be taken into consideration.

Figure 1: KPMG session on 'MES modernization and organizational change management = Medicaid transformation' at the 2024 State Healthcare IT Connect Summit

Innovation

Innovation emerged as another important theme during the State Healthcare IT Connect Summit. Various sessions highlighted innovative approaches to HHS service delivery, with a strong focus on making care improvements through low-tech solutions. These innovations aim to enhance outreach and access to care for diverse populations.

One notable example discussed during the Summit was the "Healthcare for the Homeless" approach presented by Maryland. Its team emphasized the significance of building trust within the community being served and actively listening to its specific needs. The initiative began as a pilot waiver in four counties, concentrating on integrating community health. After observing positive results, the governor allocated budgetary resources to expand the program statewide, underscoring the effectiveness of this innovative approach.

The Summit also featured sessions on improving maternal health, with presentations from Indiana and Washington, DC. Indiana highlighted the lack of prenatal care in marginalized communities, which had significant equity implications. To address this challenge, it developed the "My Healthy Baby" program, initially established as a telephone-based referral process. The program involves a series of prenatal home care visits, utilizing a light telephone screening to avoid redundant data collection and minimize sensitivity to certain topics. Following a successful four-year pilot leveraging Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) funding, the program was expanded statewide.

Washington, DC presented its "Housing Our Newborns, Empowering You" (HONEY) program, which specifically focuses on specialized supports and connection to resources for pregnant people experiencing homelessness in DC and for the housing and healthcare organizations serving them. The initial pilot was conducted in DC's

Wards 7 and 8, where between 2014 and 2018, 70 percent of the state's pregnancy-related deaths occurred, demonstrating the need for targeted interventions. The program recently obtained substantial philanthropic funding to expand services across the district, a clear indication of recognition and support for innovative solutions addressing critical community needs.

Artificial intelligence

The adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) was a highly discussed topic at the Summit. AI-specific workshops and sessions were conducted throughout the event, with a focus on utilizing AI solutions that effectively replace HHS business functions rather than merely serving as flashy technology. It was stressed that the specific AI technology used should not be the sole fixation, as it is just one component of a comprehensive business solution.

States expressed concern about the potential hype surrounding AI and the limited availability of major vendors offering innovative AI solutions for HHS. While start-ups showcased AI solutions, their suitability for HHS business purposes remained uncertain. It was suggested to utilize microservices architecture to seamlessly incorporate new AI resources without extensive IT retooling.

Lessons learned from AI projects in Arizona and Washington State included the importance of not waiting for all the requirements, concentrating on solving specific business needs rather than solely possessing a shiny tech tool, addressing ethical considerations, and framing AI as a means of "helping staff do what they want to do."

Looking ahead

Multiple sessions at the Summit discussed what lies on the horizon for Medicaid agencies and the broader HHS community. CMS is actively working on updating the Medicaid Information Technology Architecture (MITA) framework, with a strong focus on its relevance in producing tangible business outcomes.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is collaborating with the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) to enhance electronic health record (EHR) interoperability, particularly for behavioral health data. Proposed changes to the United States Core Data for Interoperability (USCDI) data standard are being opened for comments, aiming to better facilitate behavioral health exchange.

CMS is also implementing several changes, including prior authorization application programming interfaces (APIs) for automation and payer-to-payer API access, with the goal of streamlining processes and reducing resource burdens. The Trusted Exchange Framework and Common Agreement (TEFCA) was emphasized as instrumental in enabling consumer-driven data exchange. These changes may require significant operational adjustments for providers and payers alike.

About KPMG

As a trusted adviser, KPMG actively engages with key stakeholders, listens to industry concerns, and offers tailored solutions to address the evolving challenges in HHS. We aim to think big while understanding that progress is often made in increments. Whether its future-state design strategy, developing and implementing an OCM plan, or piloting AI use cases, we are ready to help you achieve your future goals.

Whether you are just beginning your transformation journey or adjusting course due to emerging trends, KPMG is here to help you think creatively, plan intentionally, and deliver successfully on your objectives.

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