

## **Safety Net Specialty Care Program Frequently Asked Questions**

Kaiser Permanente Colorado provides a unique program that allows health care safety net primary care providers to electronically request advice (e-consult) with select Kaiser Permanente specialists regarding their uninsured adult patients. The program also provides a specific face to face specialty care visits for safety-net patients in some cases and offers opportunities for medical education to safety net providers.

### **Why is Kaiser Permanente doing this?**

Kaiser Permanente's mission is to provide high-quality, affordable health care services and to improve the health of our members **and the communities we serve**. Kaiser Permanente recognizes safety nets as essential community partners in the shared goal of improving the health of individuals and communities. This program responds to a significant community need for access to specialty care for uninsured adult patients.

### **How does Kaiser Permanente balance providing specialty care services to the safety net while providing excellent access to its own members?**

Physician and department eligibility to participate in the program is dependent on their capacity to deliver timely care to KP members. Since the volume of e-consults and face-to-face visits from the safety net is generally low, and participating departments have good capacity, the program has little impact on Kaiser Permanente member care.

### **What is an electronic request (e-consult)? And how will this help patients?**

An e-consult is a medical request for advice conducted electronically, using a secure messaging platform that facilitates communication between safety net primary care providers and Kaiser Permanente specialists. Provider to provider e-consults allow for "curbside" consults with specialists to offer advice to the primary care provider to formulate or affirm a treatment plan. Some e-consults may have multiple back and forth correspondence between the treating provider and specialist to fine-tune the patient's care. Kaiser Permanente has utilized e-consults for over a decade, to provide timely specialty advice to its own primary care providers.

Current processes also provide some face to face visits following an e-consult. In addition, Kaiser Permanente provides medical education opportunities to expand safety net provider scope of practice based on the needs identified by the safety net.

### **Which safety nets have access to this program? How and why were they selected?**

Clinica Family Health Services, STRIDE Community Health Center, Salud Family Health Centers, Inner City Health Center, Tepeyac Community Health Center (formerly Clinica Tepeyac), Summit Community Care Clinic, Mission Medical Clinic, and Mountain Family Health Centers are the safety net organizations currently participating in this program. Their selection was based on a variety of factors, including strong support for the program among their leadership, technology capacity, and existing relationships with Kaiser Permanente.

### **Who can send an e-consult? What is the URL for eConsult?**

Safety net physicians, advanced practice nurses, and physician assistants from partnering safety nets may send e-consults. To receive a username and password, contact Tracy Copeland at [Tracy.S.Copeland@kp.org](mailto:Tracy.S.Copeland@kp.org) and provide first and last name, licensure, safety net organization, and site. Once received, you may sign on to [eConsultco.com](http://eConsultco.com).

**Why doesn't the program allow for e-consults or face to face visits for patients with Medicaid?**

At this time, Kaiser Permanente's specialty care services are provided to about 40,000 Medicaid members assigned to Kaiser Permanente for primary care. Kaiser Permanente is in discussions with others on how the coordination of resources across systems and communities can resolve the specialty care access challenges for Medicaid enrollees across the state.

**Which specialties are available? How and why were they selected?**

Allergy/Immunology, Dermatology, Endocrinology, Gastroenterology, Neurology, Ophthalmology, Pulmonology, and Rheumatology are participating in the program. In general, inclusion criteria is based on need, department capacity, provider willingness, and if the specialty lends itself well to e-consults.

**When was this program started? And how is it funded?**

The program was implemented on March 28, 2013, and is funded through Kaiser Permanente's Community Health & Engagement department.

**Are there plans to expand to other safety nets? To other specialties? To other means of providing specialty care?** Provider capacity, leadership support, and guidance from the program's evaluation will determine program expansion.

For questions or additional information, please contact Tracy Copeland, Program Coordinator  
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