

1,700 Western New Yorkers shared their vision for a stronger health care system in the region

To guide the region's health system in quality improvement and policy reform on community priorities, *Reaching for Excellence* is committed to measuring and monitoring system performance, while serving as an ongoing forum for regional dialogue on strengthening health care. A set of baseline indicators for each priority will be tracked over time and reported to the community.



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for a full assessment of regional performance in priority areas, including data on hospitals, health plans and regional health status.

Participants' Top Five Priorities for Health Care

#1 Make the Human Connection

Western New Yorkers want providers to recognize they are people as well as patients by showing compassion, empathy and respect for their needs.

- 83% of conversations addressed aspects of Make the Human Connection:**
 - > Restore compassion, care and emotional connections to the health encounter
 - > Support providers' ability to spend more time with patients
 - > Promote patient choice and empowerment
 - > Respect the patient's personal beliefs, cultural perspectives and privacy needs
 - > Provide health advocates for patients

#2 Lose the Hassle Factor

Western New Yorkers say that obtaining health care – from urgent to routine – should be as convenient and efficient as possible.

- 73% of conversations addressed aspects of Lose the Hassle Factor:**
 - > Integrate information technology into the system, particularly through electronic medical records
 - > Coordinate an individual's care across providers, organizations and health plans and over the course of time
 - > Reduce wait times for appointments and seeing providers
 - > Simplify administrative procedures for patients
 - > Streamline health care organizations

#3 Help Me Understand

Western New Yorkers need clear and comprehensible information to help them make better and more proactive decisions about their health.

- 70% of conversations addressed aspects of Help Me Understand:**
 - > Develop educational programs and improve providers' ability to supply health information
 - > Improve provider communication skills, including listening and capacity to explain complex health issues, especially where language or cultural barriers exist
 - > Assist patients in obtaining follow-up care, including self care, by providing clear and accurate information

#4 Make Healthy Choices

Western New Yorkers believe the region's health system needs to shift from reactive care to embrace a more proactive approach to patient health that supports awareness of and access to preventive care

- 65% of conversations addressed aspects of Make Healthy Choices:**
 - > Preventive care must be advocated and supported in the health community
 - > Patient role must include seeking preventive care and adopting healthy behavior

#5 Increase Access to Care

Western New Yorkers want broader access to care for all populations, especially the underserved - health care is a basic human right.

- 65% of conversations addressed aspects of Increase Access to Care:**
 - > Broaden and deepen access to care for all populations
 - > Increase access to care for historically underserved populations and communities

How We Can Reach Excellence Together



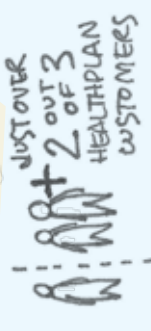
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Highlights on the WNY Health System Performance

When patients feel rushed they are less likely to sense that the doctor is listening to their concerns or addressing their needs. When doctors give patients the time they need, they are treating them as a person who may be in need of reassurance, support and understanding. This also ensures the patient will walk away with the information the need to make the best decisions for their health.

On average, just over two out of three (68%) WNY commercial health plan customers say their doctor always spends enough time with them - above the national average. Just 60% of WNY Medicaid plan enrollees are similarly satisfied.



Navigating the complex, multi-layered health system often requires assistance and guidance. As the key intermediary between the patient and access to care, from tests and treatments to providers, health care plans play a critical role in minimizing related hassles.

Just over half of Western New Yorker health plan customers say their health plan always provides the help or information they need. All health plans in the region score higher than health plans nationally, for both commercial and Medicaid.



The communication skills of doctors and nurses – including listening and explaining things in a way the patient can understand – are critical measures of how effectively patients obtain the information they need to make important decisions related to their health.

About three out of four hospital patients said doctors communicate effectively with them during their hospital stay. The rate is slightly lower for nurses. Larger hospitals in the region received lower patient satisfaction ratings, while some of Western New York's small, rural hospitals reach above 85% satisfaction levels.



An elevated blood cholesterol level is a key risk factor for heart disease, and awareness of this level is often the first step to modifying behaviors such as a poor diet and lack of exercise.

Only 34% of Western New Yorkers know their cholesterol level, suggesting the lack of a recent screening. Cholesterol awareness is highest in Erie County and lowest in the region's rural reaches.



Health insurance is a basic need for all, and the foundation for accessible, affordable and quality health care.

The large majority of Western New York adults—nine out of 10 – have some form of insurance coverage through a public or private plan, slightly higher than both the state and national rate.



Guiding quality improvement for WNY health care

Western New York's health leaders have already made significant efforts to advance patient-centered care, establishing a firm foundation for quality improvement. Building on these efforts, and as a framework for advancing performance on the community's top priorities, *Reaching for Excellence* offers the region's health leaders the following strategic recommendations:

- Embrace patient priorities
- Create improvement incentives
- Develop care improvement strategies
- Engage providers, patients and staff in identifying specific challenges and potential solutions
- Incorporate health information technology
- Support the collection of better data

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What People Want for the Future of Health Care in WNY



The Health Care Crisis

The nation's health care system is at a crisis point, as Americans engage in perhaps the most radical health care reform debate in decades. Health care spending continues to skyrocket, yet the health of Americans is compromised by costly care and inadequate coverage. Western New York has not been immune to the tumult of the industry, experiencing significant health system strains from a declining and aging population, outdated health infrastructure, high rates of poverty, porous safety nets, health care workforce shortages and a rising incidence of chronic diseases. Meanwhile, structural change is imminent, as New York State has mandated reconfiguration of Western New York hospitals and nursing homes.

Reaching for Excellence Together

As the region shapes the future of its health care system and prepares to make significant investment decisions, there is a fundamental need to incorporate the perspective of the community – as users of the system – in the current health care debate. Western New Yorkers want their voices heard, and an increasing number of community groups in the region are committed to making this happen.

Reaching for Excellence: Community Vision and Voices for Western New York Health Care emerged in 2007 as the first region-wide forum for **engaging and amplifying the consumer perspective** in shaping a stronger health care future for Western New York.

During 2008, Reaching for Excellence convened more than **1,700 Western New Yorkers** in *One Friday: Four Futures*, a series of community conversations about what people want for the future of health care in the region. Emerging from more than 100 community conversations were **five key health care priorities**, reflecting the top concerns of the community across race, income, age and geography.

Reaching for Excellence traveled across the eight-county region between January 2008 and March 2009 to convene **114 community conversations** with more than **1,700 Western New Yorkers**.

Who participated?

- 114 Community Conversations**
- 21 community groups
- 21 service providers
- 16 senior groups
- 13 general audiences
- 10 faith-based groups
- 10 hospitals, clinician groups
- 8 health advocate groups
- 7 college student groups
- 4 higher education faculty/staff
- 2 government groups
- 2 employer-sponsored groups

- LOCATIONS**
- Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Batavia, Cheektowaga, Jamestown, Amherst, Lewiston, Warsaw, Wheatfield, Albion, Cassadaga, Dunkirk, Lackawanna, Olean, Grand Island, Allegany, Gowanda, Evans, Depew, Salamanca, Alden + many other communities

- 1,732 Western New Yorkers**
- Including communities facing severe health care challenges:**
- Low-income residents (household income under \$25,000): **26%**
- Seniors (age 55+): **39%**
- Racial and ethnic minorities: **21%**



What will the future of health care in Western New York look like?

In the following four stories, an interwoven cast of patients and health care providers – Barry Glover, Miranda Trimble, Don Castle, Laura Castle Clark, Felicia Johnson, Tony Tomasello and Anita Wallace – interact with each other on a single day in 2018, Friday, June 22, to be exact. The date is the same in each story but each Friday has been reached along a different path, with distinctly different outcomes for all involved.

77 percent of community conversation participants said they would like to see WNY health care head in this direction

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>More comprehensive system; emphasis on prevention makes high-end care more scarce.</p> <p>You Get What You Need</p> | <p>Broad access to high-end, expensive care; little preventive care; system difficult to navigate.</p> <p>Don't You Worry About a Thing</p> |
| <p>Screenings are mandated; simple care needs are met; chronic care a challenge.</p> <p>With a Little Help From My Friends</p> | <p>Limited access to care, poor quality and rising costs; those who can afford it travel to the best care, those who cannot must take what they can get.</p> <p>Heaven Help Us All</p> |

44 percent of community conversation participants said this story most characterizes health care in WNY today

