

Transparency and Accountability:
End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Networks' Commitment to Continuous Improvement
Comprehensive Monitoring, Reporting, and Quality Management Drive Program Excellence

CMS' End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Network program sets a new standard for healthcare accountability through rigorous monitoring, transparent reporting, and relentless commitment to continuous improvement.

The End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Network Program is a Medicare-funded initiative that supports and coordinates quality improvement efforts across the kidney care community. Operating through 18 ESRD Networks across the United States and its territories, the program serves as a vital intermediary between CMS and the healthcare providers and facilities that deliver care to patients with kidney failure. The ESRD Networks work collaboratively with dialysis facilities to improve treatment quality and patient outcomes, with nephrologists and nephrology care teams to enhance clinical practices and care coordination, with transplant centers to increase transplant rates and improve access to kidney transplantation, and with organ procurement organizations to promote living and deceased donor transplantation. Through these partnerships, the Networks facilitate quality improvement initiatives, provide technical assistance and education to healthcare providers, monitor facility performance data, and help resolve patient concerns by coordinating with the facilities and providers responsible for their care. The program's goals including increasing home dialysis and transplant rates, reducing preventable hospitalizations, and ensuring equitable access to high-quality kidney care are achieved by strengthening the capacity and performance of the healthcare providers and facilities that serve kidney failure patients.

Every ESRD Network submits a full and transparent Comprehensive Work Plan consisting of four critical sections:

- **Management Plan:** Creating flexible platforms for addressing changing priorities and incorporating lessons learned from previous quality improvement experiences
- **Implementation Plan:** Identifying critical milestones, timelines, interventions, and targeted outcomes across all service areas
- **Communication Plan:** Engaging in education, outreach, and correspondence to deliver program-related messaging to dialysis facilities, transplant centers, and interested parties
- **Continuous Internal Quality Improvement Plan (CIQIP):** Ensuring the Networks themselves continuously improve their operations and effectiveness

The Networks provide regular updates on activities, achievements, and challenges, ensuring CMS and stakeholders maintain real-time visibility into program performance and can make data-driven adjustments as needed. This data is incorporated in a comprehensive annual assessment to measure progress toward goals, identify areas for improvement, and inform strategic planning for the coming year as well as results from regular surveys of dialysis facilities and transplant centers that ensure the Networks are meeting provider needs and delivering valuable technical assistance and support.

The program systematically identifies high-performing facilities that can serve as mentors and models, while facilities consistently failing to meet Network goals require recommendations for corrective action plan, ensuring accountability throughout the kidney care ecosystem while focusing on patient safety and quality care.

By combining transparent reporting, rigorous evaluation, and systematic identification of best practices, the ESRD Network Program creates a learning healthcare system that continuously evolves to better serve kidney patients across America.

This commitment to transparency and accountability ensures taxpayer dollars are used effectively, quality improvement efforts deliver measurable results, and kidney patients receive the highest quality care possible.