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The Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) is partnering with Healthify to address social determinants of health for the patients and families they serve. Healthify's platform is designed to help providers identify patients' social needs and connect them with local support programs, including services related to meals, transportation, safe housing and other concerns.

VNSNY will collaborate with Healthify to screen for social needs, locate resources and refer patients to community organizations. Many older adults and their families recognize that nonmedical help is necessary to maintain or improve their quality of life, but it can be overwhelming to seek out access to those services. This is where hospices can step in to offer support.

“Monitoring these social determinants of health is a critical step in community-based health care, especially hospice, because of the way these factors impact access to care,” David Rosales, executive vice president and chief strategy officer for VNSNY, told Hospice News. “Addressing these conditions early can support improved access to palliative and hospice care.”

VNSNY cares for approximately 40,000 patients and health plan members daily, VNSNY President and CEO Dan Savitt indicated. The organization cared for more than 7,000 hospice patients during 2020, Rosales told Hospice News.

Opportunities to provide nonmedical services, including [complementary therapies](#) and programs to address [social determinants of health](#) are gaining ground throughout the health care space as more stakeholders recognize that addressing these issues can help improve quality and reduce costs, allowing more elderly and seriously ill patients to remain in their homes.

The U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in 2019 announced that Medicare Advantage plans will begin covering [supplemental nonmedical benefits](#) in 2020. CMS will begin testing a [Medicare Advantage carve-in](#) for hospice in 2021, giving participating hospices access to those supplemental payments.

The Healthify platform will allow VNSNY to refer patients electronically to community-based organizations throughout the New York City metropolitan area. These organizations can stay in touch with the hospice provider to keep them in the loop on the services and support their patients receive. These groups generally provide support at no cost to the patient.

VNSNY and Healthify originally became connected through a Medicaid Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment (DSRIP) demonstration by the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). After seeing the Healthify platform at work through the demo, VNSNY pursued an expanded contract with the company.

“Clinicians in the field work hard to educate patients and family caregivers as they coordinate and manage care, but there are always going to be needs that fall outside the medical care plan,” Rosales said. “This consolidated approach also provides a greater opportunity for VNSNY to continually improve its ability to meet patient needs.”

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