

## MEDICAL SURGE AND THE ROLE OF ACCOUNTABLE CARE ORGANIZATIONS

### About Accountable Care Organizations

- ACOs are groups of healthcare providers and facilities that come together to deliver high-quality, well-coordinated care to a set patient population.
- In 2018, more than 1,000 Medicare, Medicaid, and commercial insurer ACOs covered nearly 33 million beneficiaries in all 50 states.
- ACOs share in savings generated through efficient healthcare delivery and high performance on quality measures of patient/ caregiver experience, care coordination/ patient safety, preventive health, and at-risk population management.

### Key Findings

- Variation in the composition of ACOs translates to variation in staffing, care setting, areas of expertise, resources, and ability to participate in emergency preparedness and response.
- Opportunities may exist to leverage ACO expertise in data analytics, patient education, and comprehensive case management to improve preparedness, particularly among highly vulnerable populations.
- ACO participants have capabilities such as telehealth that could assist community partners in the event of a medical surge incident.
- Disasters can threaten the business continuity of ACO participants, particularly independent practices.
- Those engaged in emergency preparedness activities do so irrespective of their participation in an ACO.

### Methodology

- Convenience sample of medical directors, executive directors, presidents, administrative officers, board members, and similar Medicare ACO leaders.
- ASPR TRACIE analyzed data from five telephone interviews with Medicare ACO leaders.
- Topics included: the role of Medicare ACOs and their participants in different emergency response scenarios; capacities and capabilities; factors that challenge or facilitate their involvement in emergency preparedness and response; and lessons learned from real-life responses.
- Environmental scan suggested non-Medicare ACOs share similar experiences.

### Opportunities to Improve Preparedness

- Raise awareness among community partners of the unique capabilities of ACOs, particularly in telehealth, case management, patient and provider education, and data analytics.
- Recognize the vulnerabilities of ACOs – especially those primarily composed of independent physician practices – during disasters and invest in business continuity planning to minimize disruptions in their operations.
- Provide education on legal and financial implications of ACO participants providing patient care during an emergency response.
- Increase awareness of tools, templates, and resources that can be used or adapted by ACOs to improve the preparedness of their participants.

### RELATED RESOURCES

- [Medical Surge and the Role of Accountable Care Organizations](#) (full report)
- [Engagement of ACOs in Medical Surge Activities](#)
- [Engaging Healthcare System Partners in Medical Surge](#) Resource Page