

## Background

Visiting Nurse Association Health Group (VNAHG) is a community health and service organization that is committed to meeting the needs of the diverse communities it serves throughout the state of New Jersey. Providing home health, hospice care, children and family health, and community-based physician services in partnership with leading New Jersey health systems, VNAHG strives to be a recognized leader in quality and innovation.

Consistent with this mission, VNAHG recently formed the Advanced Care Institute to ensure innovative, coordinated, quality care for those with advanced and chronic illness. In collaboration with VNAHG's home visiting medical practice, Visiting Physician Services, the Advanced Care Institute enables those with advanced and chronic illnesses to receive the care they need while remaining in their homes. The Advanced Care Institute furthers VNAHG's vision to transform home- and community-based health care and to provide quality, access, and value to patients, payers, and provider partners.

With development of the Advanced Care Institute, as well as the implications of a value-based payment driven market, VNAHG engaged Health Dimensions Group (HDG) to facilitate further development and growth of the Advanced Care Institute. Working collaboratively with VNAHG, HDG proposed a three-year business plan addressing issues around best practice clinical models, hospital relationships, and financial sustainability to position the Advanced Care Institute for continued success.

We spoke with Steven H. Landers, MD, MPH, president and CEO of VNAHG, to discuss the challenges and successes of developing the Advanced Care Institute, as well as the experience of working with HDG.



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**Dr. Steven Landers**, President and CEO  
Visiting Nurse Association Health Group

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## Interview

**Health Dimensions Group (HDG):** VNAHG is a unique, complex health care organization. How do you describe VNAHG?

**Dr. Steve Landers (SL):** VNAHG is a 105-year-old community health and service organization that has grown from being a local charity in central New Jersey to a statewide health care organization with a range of programs and services. VNAHG strives to be a leader in research and innovation in New Jersey. We have pilot and demonstration programs on the intersection of mobile and digital technology with home and community health, as well as new models and approaches to care coordination and post-acute care. Partnerships are an important part of our organization. We have three joint ventures with hospitals and health systems in New Jersey and work closely with the leading hospitals and medical groups on post-acute and community health strategies.

**HDG:** How did VNAHG's initial engagement with HDG to develop a strategic plan for the Advanced Care Institute come about?

**SL:** I'd previously worked with an HDG consultant on home care and post-acute care, so we knew the caliber of work HDG was capable of, and we wanted their expertise on this project. HDG helped us identify the biggest opportunities and strengths of our program and marketplace, as well as the biggest challenges. We were confident in HDG's ability to crystallize a strategy that would ensure our Advanced Care Institute had the best shot at success.

**HDG:** How does the Advanced Care Institute fit into your vision of where you're taking VNAHG?

**SL:** The Advanced Care Institute is at the center of our overall strategy to transform health care in New Jersey. We have the opportunity to improve both the quality and cost of care for people with advanced and chronic illnesses. These individuals and their families will benefit greatly from more in-home holistic medical care and support from both primary care and palliative medicine. However, these are not easy businesses to grow and sustain as, by their nature, home-based medical care and palliative medicine services are relatively low in encounters. This presents major challenges in the fee-for-service world. However, given the importance of this type of holistic, person-centered care as the New Jersey market transitions to value-based payment, HDG helped us develop a vision and plan to grow the Advanced Care Institute and make a difference in the New Jersey health care market.

**HDG:** How does the Advanced Care Institute help you to be a strong collaborator with your health systems partners?

**SL:** The Advanced Care Institute fills an important gap in the health system for those patients with late-stage chronic illnesses, who have difficulty leaving their home for medical care or have been to multiple facilities for treatment without results. We're enriching that whole health system by ensuring there are home-based primary care options, palliative medicine experts, and other supportive care available to ensure quality of care and quality of life for these individuals and their families. As health systems develop

their population health and value-based care strategies, the Advanced Care Institute offers extraordinary value by addressing the needs of a small, but potentially very high-cost and high-suffering population.

**HDG:** What key things must VNAHG accomplish to remain successful and continue to flourish?

**SL:** First, our quality and patient experience must be unambiguously the best. Health care providers are evaluated on the quality and efficiency of care. VNAHG has worked hard to have the right technology, management model, and culture to drive improvements in both those areas. Partnerships are also crucial to our success. Our role is to ensure that people with serious chronic illness have seamless transitions from the facility to home so they do not end up hospitalized or institutionalized. This requires communication and close partnerships in the health care market. Finally, we need to innovate. Home care is all about mobility. We must find mobile and digital technology that allows patients to stay in touch between visits. The more we can use apps, remote monitoring, and overall telehealth concepts to improve the quality and efficiency of what we do, the more we'll succeed.

**HDG:** What was the working relationship with HDG like?

**SL:** It's been a great working relationship and valuable to our organization. All the consultants have been knowledgeable, patient, organized, and prepared; HDG really understood the importance of communicating their work to our team and to our partners at all levels. In fact, we've reached out to HDG on another very important project.

**HDG:** What advice would you offer to someone looking to lead a community-based post-acute organization such as yours?

**SL:** Palliative care, advanced illness care, and home medical care are hard programs to grow and sustain, but the impact of this programming—being able to improve quality of life and reduce suffering, while lowering the overall cost of care—is the core of everything that needs to be happening in health care. It is certainly not easy to accomplish, but it is worthwhile. My advice is find a partner like HDG to help navigate a path that will lead your organization to success.

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#### About HDG

As one of the country's leading full-service post-acute and senior services management and consulting firms, Health Dimensions Group partners with clients to deliver solutions that help solve their most complicated needs.

Call us today at 763.537.5700 to learn how HDG can help your organization navigate a path for success.