



National Center
for Excellence in
Primary Care Research

Bridging Gaps and Uniting Partners to Improve Primary Care in the Commonwealth of Virginia

AHRQ Impact: The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's (AHRQ's) investment in [Heart of Virginia Healthcare](#) (a regional cooperative participating in the EvidenceNOW: Advancing Heart Health Initiative) led to additional work and investments by other funders – resulting in sustained efforts to improve the quality of primary care in the Commonwealth.

The [Virginia Task Force on Primary Care](#) is a dynamic public/private partnership designed to unite leaders from various disciplines and industries to tackle the pressing challenges and seize opportunities within the Commonwealth of Virginia's primary care landscape.



The AHRQ [EvidenceNOW] grant was when we first started putting together a team of people across different organizations to do something to address primary care for all Virginians. That AHRQ opportunity was the first [time] we had the resources to think about how we could work more collaboratively to improve primary care in the commonwealth."



– Beth Bortz, MPP; VCHI President and CEO

Established in 2020 by the [Virginia Center for Health Innovation](#) (VCHI), the Task Force builds on the foundational work in the Commonwealth from AHRQ's [EvidenceNOW: Advancing Heart Health](#) initiative. This AHRQ funded work was instrumental in convening the state's first multi-stakeholder group dedicated to enhancing primary care delivery, inclusive of all payers and providers.

Members of the Virginia Task Force on Primary Care include frontline clinicians, provider associations, employers, health systems and practices, payers, and state health department and Medicaid agency representatives. To date, the Task Force has had several important achievements¹, including:

- Distributing urgently needed personal protective equipment to primary care practices at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Successfully advocating for an increase in Medicaid primary care rates in Virginia.
- Piloting an alternative payment model to support the integration of primary care and behavioral health for children and adolescents.
- Developing reports on the [total cost of care](#) and [spending](#) for primary care in Virginia, as well as an annual [Primary Care Scorecard](#) for detailed information about the health of primary care in Virginia.
- Establishing the [Primary Care Innovation Hub](#) to share best practices and information for primary care stakeholders in the state.

¹ Walker L, Watkins LD, Koller C. Defining the State Role in Primary Care Reform. Issue Brief; Milbank Memorial Fund. May 2024. https://www.milbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Defining-the-State-Role-in-Primary-Care-Reform_final.pdf. Accessed on August 21, 2024.

By working directly with primary care practices during EvidenceNOW, VCHI learned first-hand about the challenges facing primary care – including the need for infrastructure to support high-quality, evidence-based care. When recruiting practices to participate in EvidenceNOW, VCHI also built relationships with primary care practices throughout the commonwealth. These relationships have proven vital for the current work of the Virginia Task Force on Primary Care.



We've built a really solid foundation for doing this work, and a lot of that came from that initial partnership building we did for EvidenceNOW."

– Beth Bortz



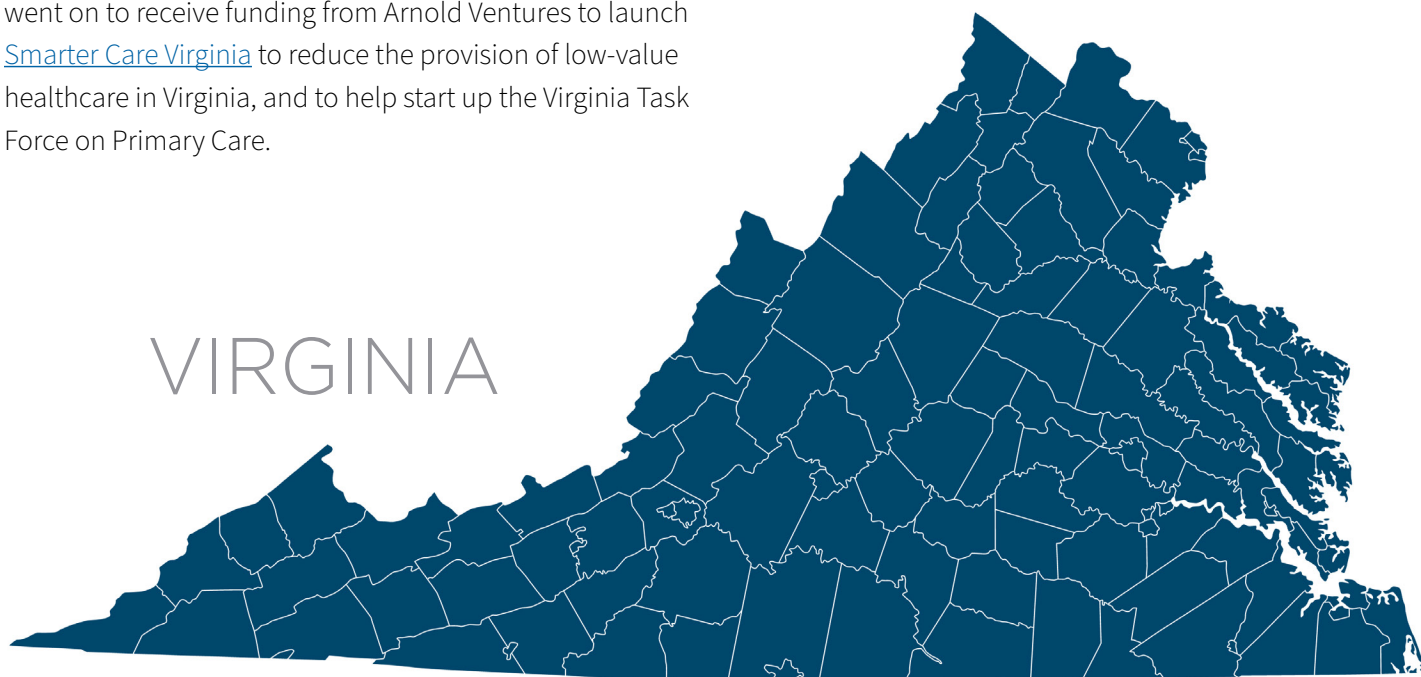
It was the first time that my organization played a large role in recruiting practices, and that experience helped us establish trust with the primary care community."

– Beth Bortz

In addition, receiving AHRQ funding helped establish VCHI's reputation as a trustworthy organization for other potential funders. After their participation in EvidenceNOW, VCHI went on to receive funding from Arnold Ventures to launch [Smarter Care Virginia](#) to reduce the provision of low-value healthcare in Virginia, and to help start up the Virginia Task Force on Primary Care.

The Virginia Task Force on Primary Care has demonstrated that public/private partnerships can effectively work to improve healthcare. Other states, including Massachusetts and California, are working to establish their own task forces on primary care, and have reached out to Virginia for advice and guidance in this process. The Task Force has now worked with governors from both political parties and has a commitment from the state for annual funding in the budget.

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