Smartlink Health

Red Flags That a Clinic May Be About to Leave Your ACO



Understanding Your ACO Clinics

Based on the insights from the webinar “A Candid Look at ACO Participation,” these red flags offer early warning signs that a clinic may be disengaging. Each flag includes guiding questions and action tips to help your ACO retain high-performing clinics through proactive, meaningful support.

1 Decreased Engagement

When clinics begin pulling back from ACO-led initiatives, it may signal a drop in perceived value or a buildup of operational strain.

Questions to Ask

- Are clinic staff still attending ACO events regularly?
- Has participation in improvement initiatives dropped off?
- Are response times to ACO outreach slowing down?

Proactive ACO Actions

✓ Check-in with key contacts to understand obstacles to participation.

✓ Offer flexible formats for meetings and learning (e.g., recordings, office hours).

✓ Tailor outreach to be more relevant to clinic priorities.

Engagement can be regained with small but meaningful gestures—like acknowledging competing demands, celebrating clinic wins, and removing friction from everyday tasks. Consider whether your ACO is seen as a source of support or an added layer of burden.

Smartlink Health
1000 Centre Green Way • Suite 250 • Cary, North Carolina 27513
877-502-3067 • info@smartlinkhealth.com • smartlinkhealth.com

2 Declining Use of ACO Tools or Resources

Low tool usage may not indicate disinterest—it often reflects workflow incompatibility or tool fatigue.

Questions to Ask

- Have logins to shared data platforms decreased?
- Are referrals to ACO-provided services or teams dropping?

Proactive ACO Actions

✓ Assess ease-of-use and accessibility of each tool or resource.

✓ Survey clinics to identify barriers to adoption.

✓ Reduce duplicative tools and highlight success stories using the tools effectively.

Instead of pushing adoption through mandates, consider co-designing workflows with clinic input. When providers help shape the solution, they're far more likely to use it—and advocate for its success internally.



Smartlink Health

1000 Centre Green Way • Suite 250 • Cary, North Carolina 27513

877-502-3067 • info@smartlinkhealth.com • smartlinkhealth.com

3 Challenging the Value Proposition

When clinics start questioning financials, delays, or administrative requirements, they may be weighing their ROI.

Questions to Ask

- Are clinics raising concerns about denial rates or payment schedules?
- Is your team hearing more finance-related pushback than before?

Proactive ACO Actions

✓ Ensure transparency in payment timelines and performance reporting.

✓ Reaffirm year-round value beyond shared savings payouts.

✓ Provide guidance on how clinic actions translate into results.

Every conversation about financial strain is an opportunity to re-establish trust. Don't assume silence means satisfaction—proactively surface concerns and lead with transparency, especially when the upside isn't immediate.



4 Increased Self-Sufficiency

Independence isn't always bad—but if a clinic is investing internally, it may be preparing to operate without you.

Questions to Ask

- Is the clinic building its own analytics or care coordination capabilities?
- Are they requesting more strategic, advanced information?
- Do they seem less reliant on your ACO for support?

Proactive ACO Actions

✓ Reposition your ACO as a partner—not a manager.

✓ Highlight complementary capabilities rather than overlapping ones.

✓ Invite them to help shape shared initiatives.

Clinics building internal capabilities are signaling they want more autonomy. That doesn't mean they want to leave—but they do want more relevance. Lean into these conversations with curiosity, not defensiveness.



5 Change in Leadership/Ownership

Leadership transitions often shift clinic priorities or loyalty to the ACO.

Questions to Ask

- Has the clinic experienced a recent ownership or leadership change?
- Is new leadership familiar with your ACO's goals and performance?

Proactive ACO Actions

✓ Schedule an introductory meeting with new leadership.

✓ Demonstrate the clinic's value to the ACO—and vice versa.

✓ Ask how you can support their evolving strategy.

Leadership transitions are critical moments to re-introduce your ACO's value. Make it easy for new leaders to understand why their predecessors joined—and what's been achieved. Offer continuity and support, not assumptions.



6 Subtle Competitive Research

Clinics exploring other ACOs or exit policies may already be halfway out the door.

Questions to Ask

- Are they asking about exit processes or data portability?
- Are they comparing your ACO to others?
- Have they attended competitor events recently?

Proactive ACO Actions

✓ Reinforce your unique differentiators proactively.

✓ Address concerns about transparency, flexibility, and support.

✓ Ask what they're hearing—and what they wish was different.

Competitive curiosity isn't inherently negative—it reflects an active desire to improve. Rather than shutting it down, open the door to honest dialogue. Ask what they're hearing and how you can rise to meet those expectations.



CONCLUSION

From Red Flags to Realignment

Clinic disengagement doesn't happen overnight. It's often a slow drift—masked by polite participation, inconsistent tool usage, or quiet independence. But when you know what signs to watch for and how to respond proactively, you can shift the dynamic from friction to alignment. Use this checklist not just as a scorecard, but as a springboard for meaningful conversations. When clinics feel heard, supported, and understood, they don't just stay—they lean in.
Want to hear more real-world insight directly from the clinic side?



Click the link below to watch the on-demand webinar:

A Candid Look at ACO Participation: Why Clinics and Why They Might Leave

ABOUT SMARTLINK HEALTH

Smartlink Health helps ACOs improve performance by reducing clinic burden and making value-based care workflows scalable. Our Smartlink Data Connector (SDC) enables seamless, bi-directional integration with 90+ EHRs—via UI, APIs, HL7, or databases—without requiring EHR vendor involvement.

Our point-of-care solutions, DxInsight and GapCheck, deliver risk adjustment and care gap data directly into the EHR workflow, eliminating the need for multiple portals or retrospective processes. This allows clinics to act during the visit—not weeks later—while aligning with ACO performance goals.

Smartlink also supports key Medicare initiatives including AWV, CCM, CoCM, and TCM.

To learn more, visit SmartlinkHealth.com.

Smartlink Health
1000 Centre Green Way • Suite 250 • Cary, North Carolina 27513
877-502-3067 • info@smartlinkhealth.com • smartlinkhealth.com