



CCHN NEWSLETTER

JULY 2020



Health Center News

Determined to Thrive: Colorado CHCs During COVID-19

When COVID-19 arrived in Colorado in March 2020, unprecedented challenges arrived with it. Colorado CHCs continue to rise to the challenge, innovating constantly to keep providing excellent care to their patients and communities.



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Northwest Colorado Health uses its strengths in both technology and people to support a changing care landscape. They quickly developed telehealth workflows and shared them with other CHC partners, assuring quality care to patients across multiple counties. Staff is developing app-based technology to automatically upload patient vital statistics recorded at home to electronic health records (EHR). Local volunteers are stepping in to support reopening the dental clinic by making and supplying color-coded gowns.

With nimble thinking and strong community engagement, Valley-Wide Health Systems redeployed all staff without furloughs. Valley-Wide collaborates with local public health agencies to offer regular community testing onsite and at local homeless shelters, and to support contact tracing. Three staff members are in training to be contact tracers, helping Valley-Wide take on a more active role in tracking the spread of COVID-19 throughout the state. To further help its vulnerable low-income and elderly patients access care through telehealth, Valley-Wide received funding from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) telehealth program to purchase needed video equipment.

Dedication from staff empowers CHCs to focus on patient care. Knowing their care teams and staff would be stretched to their capacity, Axis Health System rapidly developed a protocol for staff engagement during the pandemic.

The protocol includes app-based staff wellness tools, communication guidance, and change management training resources. Axis shared this guidance with other Colorado CHCs at a recent CCHN Board of Directors meeting.

How does a CHC hire providers during a pandemic? Pueblo Community Health Center can tell you—by getting creative. PCHC successfully onboarded at least four new providers virtually, supporting strong productivity through the spring. To help meet COVID-19-related needs, Pueblo's medical team now offers behavioral health screenings at every telehealth visit and partici-



participates regularly in county-sponsored community testing. With a flexible approach to reassigning staff who could not be on the front lines, PCHC ramped up focus on its medical digitization project to modernize its data management.

With a population impacted disproportionately severely by the pandemic, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, always innovative, quickly tried new ways of providing care. Medical and behavioral health providers team up to offer shared telehealth visits, and onsite telehealth equipment is available for patients to use. Thanks to CCH grants and partnerships with several Denver hotels, unhoused patients with or at high risk for COVID-19 can rely on a safe place to sleep and get healthy.

As COVID-19 continues to place demands on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), STRIDE Community Health Center relies on strong collaboration with partners including Jefferson County Public Health and the National Strategic Stockpile to keep their providers and staff masked, gowned, and





gloved to safely care for patients. STRIDE has been one of the CHC COVID-19 testing pioneers, offering curbside testing and community-wide testing starting early on in the public health emergency. To manage high volumes of community testing, some STRIDE staff have been redeployed to make testing swab kits to help supplement supplies from Quest and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE).

Sunrise Community Health took quick action on the front and the back end of clinic operations to ensure patients can access care through the pandemic. They swiftly opened a drive-thru pharmacy. Medical assistants and dental staff have teamed up to develop new patient outreach processes, using data from their EHR to identify and contact high-risk patients to provide additional support. With this extra care and outreach, Sunrise patients have been able to keep up with their health care and the clinic has maintained consistent productivity during uncertain times.

Salud Family Health Centers has provided accessible mobile health care to migrant farmworkers since 1980. When COVID-19 hit the community and the mobile unit had to close, Salud's Migrant Health Director Deb Salazar and her staff stepped up their relationships with local farms, dairies, and greenhouses to keep providing care to migrant patients. Salud quickly shifted its care model to offer testing, patient enrollment, and safety education at worksites. Staff regularly reaches out to these essential community partners to provide clinic updates and advise on safe workplace practices. Thanks to partnerships with the National Center for Farmworker Health and Project Protect Food Systems, volunteers have provided hundreds of cloth face masks for patients.

Governor Polis Visits Peak Vista

On Friday, January 31, 2020, Colorado's Governor Jared Polis and State Representative Tony Exum, Sr. (HD17), visited Peak Vista's Health Center at Jet Wing to learn about the exceptional medical and dental care that incorporates the behavioral health services Peak Vista Community Health Centers offer to their growing patient population. The Peak Vista executive team offered a special thank you to staff members Danita Montoya, Lois Vigil, Nikole Bacon and Miriam Garcia, who took their time to show the guests Peak Vista's Jet Wing facility and services.



Anonymous Donor Helps Colorado CHCs with PPE

CCHN is grateful to the National Center for Farmworker Health (NCFH), which at the request of an anonymous donor and efforts through Facemasks4Farmworkers Campaign, Justice for Migrant Women, and the Hispanic Heritage Foundation, is distributing PPE to all Community/Migrant Health Centers. The PPE includes three-ply surgical masks and nitrile gloves for staff, and cloth facemasks for agricultural workers, patients, families, and community members.

Pueblo's Continued Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Collaboration with local and global organizations has been a crucial element in Pueblo Community Health Center's (PCHC) continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They have remained open since the onset of the pandemic, and both office morale and operational logistics have benefited greatly from the support of



community partners.

On April 22, drive-through testing for COVID-19 opened for the first time in Pueblo County at the Colorado State Fairgrounds. This testing site is very influential in Pueblo County's efforts to flatten the curve and educate the community, and PCHC has been represented on every single day of operation. The following individuals have gone above and beyond their regular duties to serve their community at the Colorado State Fairgrounds COVID-19 testing site:

Lila Padilla, RN
Desiree Baca, RN
Melissa Espinoza, RN
Dr. Claire Reed
Judy Cooper, RN
Quianna Valdez, RMA
Caroline Marquez, RMA
Hadassah Trujillo, RMA
Haylee Williford, RMA

In May, PCHC received community support in the form of an Appreciation Parade organized by Faith Leaders in Action. PCHC staff gathered outside the Colorado Clinic on May 20 to accept praise and gratitude from individuals who drove by with balloons and posters.

And finally, on June 24, PCHC received a donation of medical supplies from Project C.U.R.E., the world's largest distributor of donated medical equipment and supplies. On behalf of Project C.U.R.E., Major Milt Moores piloted a large donation of PPE to the Pueblo Memorial Airport, where PCHC Maintenance Specialist Ted Gramlich met him to pick up the delivery. Project C.U.R.E operates in more than 130 countries and delivers an average of three to five semi-truck sized containers of supplies every week to organizations in need. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Project C.U.R.E. has actively supported local health care systems in the U.S. by bringing donations to hospitals, EMS and governments in Colorado, Tennessee, Texas, Illinois, and Arizona. PCHC is grateful for this donation and will use it to keep their patients and staff as safe as possible.

Policy Update

2020 State Legislative Session Comes to a Close

The 2020 legislative session was one of the most notable and unprecedented sessions in Colorado history. The session began on Jan. 8, but the legislature took a 10-week pause from March 14 to May 26 due to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, and finally wrapped up on June 15. Throughout the session, CCHN staff, lobbyists, and CHCs worked to ensure that legislators understood the value and importance of CHCs, especially during a public health emergency.

CCHN worked on several items throughout the legislative session, with a large focus on reimbursement for telemedicine services. CCHN introduced its priority bill, HB20-1092: Reimbursement to Federally Qualified Health Centers, sponsored by Rep. Yadira Caraveo (HD31) and Sen. Kerry Donovan (SD5), early in the session, which passed its first committee hearing with unanimous support. Before the bill could progress further, the legislature paused, and the state enacted an emergency rule allowing CHCs to be reimbursed for telemedicine through the remainder of the public health emergency. When the legislative session resumed, CCHN and HB20-1092 sponsors made the difficult decision to withdraw the legislation based on the state's tough budget situation and other potential avenues to continue telemedicine reimbursement. Later in the session, CCHN actively supported SB20-212: Reimbursement for Telehealth Services, sponsored by Rep. Susan Lontine (HD1) and Sen. Faith Winter (SD24), which requires the state to reimburse providers, including CHCs, for telemedicine services provided to Medicaid recipients through and after the COVID-19 public health emergency. After a rocky path to codifying telemedicine reimbursement this legislative session, CHCs

ultimately saw victory in the passing of SB20-212, and telemedicine is here to stay.

CCHN supported several other bills that passed this session. HB20-1236: Health Care Coverage Easy Enrollment Program, sponsored by Rep. Perry Will (HD57) and Sen. Jeff Bridges (SD26), will allow Coloradans on state income tax returns to request an assessment of whether uninsured household members are potentially eligible for free or subsidized health care coverage. SB20-215: Health Insurance Affordability Enterprise, sponsored by Rep. Julie McCluskie (HD61) and Sen. Dominick Moreno (SD21), will create an enterprise fund to assess a fee on private health insurance carriers beginning in 2021 and will make insurance more affordable for people left out of the ACA.

Not all bills that CCHN supported survived this unprecedented legislative session. HB20-1349: Colorado Affordable Health Care Option, sponsored by Sen. Donovan (SD5) and Rep. Ellen Roberts (HD26), would have required the state to form a public-private partnership with insurance companies to offer a Colorado public option health plan to consumers through the state's individual marketplace. Lawmakers withdrew this legislation due to the impacts COVID-19 had on the health care system and the state's need to reexamine what health care will look like after the pandemic.

For the state budget, the Colorado legislature finalized a \$30.3 billion budget for FY 2020-21 after weeks of difficult work to balance a \$3 billion deficit brought on by the pandemic. During the budget balancing process, the legislature agreed not to cut any funds from critical programs for CHCs like the Primary Care Fund or the Colorado Indigent Care Program. However, a June state revenue projection warned that next year's state budget will likely be the same, if not worse, than this year, as the legislature had to enact many one-time solutions to balance this year's tricky budget. CCHN will work to mitigate future budget challenges and support advances in health care during next year's legislative session.

CCHN Staff Update

Cassidy Christopher joined CCHN as the Policy Analyst at the Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN). Ms. Christopher officially joined CCHN in March 2020, but was previously an intern while completing her master's programs in public health and social work at the University of Denver. Her main responsibilities at CCHN include performing data analysis on a variety of health care programs associated with health care costs and care, representing CCHN and member CHCs at various stakeholder meetings, and monitoring and tracking health care legislation and regulations based on the CCHN Public Affairs Agenda. In her spare time, Ms. Christopher enjoys painting, board games, and spending quality time with her pets.

Jeremy Brown joined CCHN as the Health Center Operations Division Assistant in April 2020. His work supports CHCs in all aspects of health center operations, including workforce development, data analysis, and technical trainings. Mr. Brown attended the University of Denver, where he earned his master of arts degree in international development with a concentration in global health and infectious diseases. Previously, he received a bachelor of science from Colorado State University in Natural Resource Management. Before joining CCHN, Jeremy was a Peace Corps Volunteer serving in Hlotse, Lesotho, where he worked as a community health and youth development volunteer for two years.

Adam Carey joined CCHN as the Accounting Clerk in June 2020. His responsibilities include processing bills and invoices, preparing payroll for CCHN staff, and offering support to the Accountant and CFO. Mr. Carey earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting from Minnesota State University Mankato in 2017. Mr. Carey worked at Aramark in Minneapolis as an accounting assistant before moving to Colorado. In his free time, he enjoys running, hiking, cooking, and further developing his understanding of Japanese language and culture.

Rosario Morales joined CCHN as the Payment Reform Manager in May 2020. Her primary responsibility is to support CHCs in value-based payment and launch a population-based payment option in Medicaid. Ms. Morales has extensive experience with federally qualified health centers (FQHCs). She spent 17 years with

Salud Family Health Centers, serving in multiple functions throughout the years and working as their Billing Manager during the last 7 years. Ms. Morales oversaw the billing, coding and credentialing departments and provided guidance and expertise to providers, managers and staff across all clinics and departments of the organization. In her free time, Ms. Morales enjoys crocheting, camping, and road trips.



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CHAMPS Staff Update

Ashley Hussein joined CHAMPS in March 2020. Her focus is assisting Region VIII CHCs with workforce recruitment, retention, and educational opportunities, as well as meeting CHAMPS' communication needs. Ms. Hussein received her bachelor of science in nutrition with an emphasis on public health from the University of Minnesota. Prior to joining CHAMPS, Ms. Hussein's background was focused on food justice and nutrition education—volunteering, interning, and working at several food pantries and food banks in Minnesota and Colorado, including co-founding the Nutritious U Food Pantry. In her free time, Ms. Hussein enjoys spending time with her husband Jordan and their rescue dog Daisy, cross-stitching, cooking, and traveling.

CHPA Staff Update

Gary Secino joined CHPA as the Risk Adjustment Coding Manager in June 2020. He is responsible for identifying opportunities to improve provider documentation and creating a customized risk adjustment and coding education plan tailored to each CHC. Mr. Secino has extensive experience with risk adjustment. Most recently, he worked at Physician Health Partners as a risk adjustment educator and manager and provided leadership and management of coding, auditing, and education functions in their practices. He was responsible for hiring, training and developing staff, implementing policies and procedures, establishing goals, objectives, and all of the benchmarks for the department. Mr. Secino was also responsible for chart audits, encounter forms, reimbursement analysis and coding education for providers, billing office and clinics. In his free time, Mr. Secino enjoys hiking, walking his dogs, and yoga.

Upcoming Events

National Health Center Week 2020: A Time to Shine a Light on CHCs

The theme of this year's National Health Center Week (NHCW) is "Community Health Centers: Lighting the Way for Healthier Communities Today and in the Future." This year, National Health Center Week is August 9-15, and is an annual celebration with the goal of raising awareness about the mission and accomplishments of America's CHCs over more than five decades.

CHCs serve as the beacon of strength, service, and care in their communities. This NHCW honors the ongoing efforts of CHCs to make sure that health care continues to be accessible, regardless of income or insurance coverage. As reported above, CHC have worked hard in this strange and difficult year to continue to care for their communities. In addition, this NHCW honors those front line providers, staff, and patients who have lost their lives during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Because the spread of the virus and the need for all staff to be focused on the immediate health care needs of their communities, there won't be all the usual NHCW events this year: health fairs, parades, block parties, and other gatherings. Instead, you can help make sure your CHC can continue its work well into the future by signing up to be an advocate and by contacting your members of Congress now to support needed emergency and long-term funding for CHCs. Visit our [website](#) to sign up to be an advocate for CHCs.

During NHCW, light a candle for those community health leaders and patients that we lost. As we commemorate those lives and celebrate the future of Community Health, let's shine a light across the country that will embody the future of primary health care for all. Share with others the value your CHC brings to your community.



July 2020 Newsletter Contributors



CCHN Newsletter Editor: [Maureen Maxwell](#); Assistant Editor: [Melissa Wright](#)

Contributors: Sarah LaRue, Alice Steiner, Stephanie Brooks, [CCHN](#); Ashley Hussein, [CHAMPS](#); Gary Secino, [CHPA](#); Zoe Martin, [Peak Vista](#); Jennifer DeGroot, Sommer Street, [Pueblo Community Health Center](#)

About CCHN

The Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN) is the unified voice for Colorado's 20 Community Health Centers (CHCs) and their patients. CHCs provide a health care home to more than 852,000 of their community members - one in seven people in Colorado - from 62 of the state's 64 counties. Without CHCs, hundreds of thousands of Colorado's low-income families and individuals would have no regular source of health care. CCHN's mission is to increase access to high quality health care for people in need in Colorado. For more information about CCHN, please visit www.cchn.org.



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