

CCHN NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2023



Community Health Center News

National Health Center Week in Colorado

National Health Center Week, Aug. 6-12, is an annual celebration to raise awareness about the mission and accomplishments of Community Health Centers (CHCs) across the country. Did you know, for example, that Community Health Centers provide comprehensive health care to more than 30 million patients each year?

In fact, Governor Polis officially [issued a proclamation](#) to recognize National Health Center Week in Colorado.

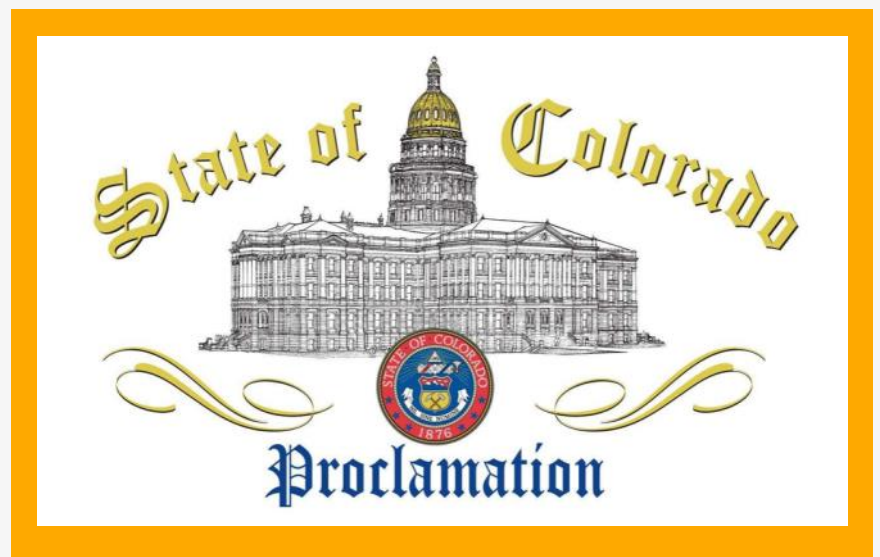
Colorado's 20 CHCs, with 243 clinic sites, provide a health care home for more than 832,000 Coloradans. That's one in seven people in the state, including 20% of Health First Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid program) and Child Health Plan *Plus* enrollees.

CHCs across Colorado are celebrating National Health Center Week through patient and staff appreciation events. Several CHCs plan to show appreciation to their staff with lunches, ice cream, small gifts, or yoga classes. One CHC is offering coloring pages for staff to de-stress during their staff breakfast. Others are planning patient appreciation events with food and small giveaways. Another CHC is hosting its annual community barbecue, complete with hometown firetruck rides and food, games, and health information.

Contact [your local CHC](#) to see what events are happening near you.

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Ross Brooks Celebrated for Leadership and Service to Community Health

Last week, CCHN's Board of Directors honored Ross Brooks, CEO of Mountain Family Health Centers, for his many years of service to the Community Health Center movement by declaring July 12 to be Ross Brooks Day.

Mr. Brooks started his CHC journey at CCHN in 2002 as CCHN's health center operations director. In 2012, he became CEO of Mountain Family, where he leads Mountain Family's values, vision, and mission, which includes overseeing the strategic plan, workforce, operations, and more. He is driven by the simple principle that access to affordable health care is a human right, not a privilege. In this role, he piloted Mountain Family through changes to the health care system resulting from the Affordable Care Act, changing local economies, and the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic. He led Mountain Family through the initiation of Colorado's payment reform project, one of three CHCs in the initial cohort exploring moving Colorado CHCs from an encounter payment to a per member per month payment.

Mr. Brooks is a member of CCHN's Board of Directors, Public Affairs Committee, Payment Reform Committee, and APM2 Workgroup (APM2 is Colorado's Alternative Payment Model giving primary care providers a value-based option for caring for Health First Colorado enrollees). He also serves on boards of The Colorado Health Foundation, Valley Health Alliance, and Reunion Health, LLC.

While at CCHN, Mr. Brooks helped CHCs sustain and strengthen existing operations and expand the CHC model across Colorado, focusing on CCHN's community development, workforce development, emergency preparedness, operations assistance, and health information technology efforts. He was staff lead for CCHN's Statewide Strategic Planning, Environmental Assessment, and the Uniform Data System. In addition, he was staff lead for the Colorado Operations Directors Advisory Network, Health Information Technology Committee, and Strategic Data Committee.

Mr. Brooks also took the lead on crafting legislation to create the Colorado Health Service Corps, a state-funded loan repayment program for health professionals serving in underserved areas of the state. The Governor appointed him to serve on the committee overseeing the implementation of this new program. He aided in the passage of legislation creating a tobacco tax that supports Colorado CHCs and other similar entities. In addition, he helped lead development of CCHN's Colorado Associated Community Health Information Exchange (CACHIE), a collaborative project of CCHN and the Colorado Community Managed Care Network (CCMCN). He also started a Group Purchasing Organization (GPO) that harnesses the power of multiple CHCs to negotiate better purchasing rates for the CHCs. He spearheaded the process for and implementation of a CHC employee scholarship program for high-achieving, entry-level CHC staff.

In 2008, he was selected for the prestigious Geiger Gibson Emerging Leader Award, given by George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services.



"We found a photo of Ross's desk from 2016 with a handwritten sign that says, 'Patients first.' That sums Ross up all right. We will miss him when he leaves Mountain Family in August. At the same time, we will know he is out there using his energy, expertise, creativity, and joyfulness to continue making this world a better place," said Annette Kowal, CCHN's CEO and president.

Tepeyac Receives Opportunity Now Workforce Grant

Tepeyac Community Health Center staff welcomed Governor Jared Polis at their new clinic to announce the [Opportunity Now](#) grant. This workforce and talent development grant will allow Tepeyac, and many other awardees, to provide opportunities for Coloradans to develop skills and experience while unlocking access to good-paying jobs.

"We recognize that our mission to provide affordable and accessible health care for all only succeeds when our staff reflects our community and shares our mission. This Opportunity Now grant will enable us to launch the health care careers of individuals in our community who may not have had this opportunity while also growing our culture and retaining our dedicated health care workers," said Jim Garcia, Tepeyac's CEO and founder.



Governor Jared Polis with Tepeyac Staff and other awardees.

Peak Vista to Launch PMHNP Fellowship Program

Peak Vista will launch a new Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) Fellowship Program in 2024. This new PMHNP program could not come at a more critical time as mental health concerns continue to rise both within Colorado communities and across the country.

Every location in which Peak Vista operates, as well as nearly every county in the state, is considered a Health Professional Shortage Area for mental health, and access to psychiatric care is limited. The percentage of patients with mental and behavioral health concerns presenting at primary care visits is increasing. Making matters worse, as more long-time psychiatric providers retire, new PMHNPs entering the workforce are often without mentors to help navigate this challenging and demanding landscape. Programs like this one will help Peak Vista to build the workforce needed to continue making integrated medical, dental, and behavioral health care customary.

The program will create opportunities for students graduating from PMHNP programs to receive mentorship and support along their professional journey. It will also serve as a complement to Peak Vista's current Family Nurse Practitioner Fellowship program, which boasts a 50 percent provider retention rate for Peak Vista. This will be only the third such program in Colorado, with the other two in the Metro Denver area and on the Western Slope.

The PMHNP Fellowship program, which will accept five Fellows each year, is set to launch in August 2024, with recruitment efforts beginning later this year and into early 2024. Peak Vista and CCHN will share updates as this new program comes to fruition.

Housing and Health Care

Colorado Coalition for the Homeless released a [Health & Homelessness Issue Brief \(2023 Update of 2019 version\)](#). The brief delves into details on the links between housing and health care, the impacts of adverse conditions on people experiencing homelessness, and solutions that work.

CHC Staff Participate in Verbal De-escalation and Workplace Violence Training

Responding to a request from CHC CEOs and several CHC staff peer groups, CCHN partnered with [DART](#) to train 75 Community Health Center staff on verbal de-escalation and workplace violence prevention tactics. Participants had the opportunity to learn about workplace safety systems, situational awareness, response methods for escalating situations, and to practice application to realistic workplace scenarios.

The initial training occurred in April with 37 CHC staff participants. After receiving several requests for additional CHC staff to be trained, CCHN was able to offer a second course in June for 38 more participants. CHC staff members expressed that the training was very helpful, and they appreciated the opportunity to learn best practices and discuss role-specific scenarios.

If you want to learn more about DART or other workplace safety resources for CHCs, [email Emily Bauer](#).

Sunrise Community Health Welcomes Representative Yadira Caraveo

Sunrise Community Health staff are updating U.S. Representative Yadira Caraveo, CD8, on local health care concerns. Sunrise staff attended the open house for Rep. Caraveo's Greeley office, and hosted her staff for clinic tours.

Staff from Sunrise Community Health with Rep. Yadira Caraveo, second from right.



San Luis Valley Emergency Preparedness Workshop for Ancillary Partners

On June 8, CCHN partnered with Valley-Wide Health Systems and the San Luis Valley Healthcare Coalition to pilot an ancillary partner emergency preparedness tabletop exercise and workshop.

Ancillary care is a term used to define a specific type of health partner that supports the delivery of health and medical care (aside from hospitals). Ancillary care partners include Community Health Centers, urgent care facilities, long term care facilities, home health and hospice providers, pharmacies, and other partners essential to supporting the health care sector.

The purpose of the tabletop exercise and workshop was to bring together partners that are often “left out” or not highly considered in emergency management planning, and determine what roles they can play during a disaster. This was not something that had been done before, so the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment asked CCHN to pilot this approach and see how it could benefit the Healthcare Coalitions.

This pilot exercise brought together all types of ancillary partners along with county emergency managers, hospitals, emergency medical services, and other key emergency management partners to discuss the needs of ancillary partners during a disaster. Ancillary partners had the opportunity to work through a practice scenario to discuss all phases of disaster response and identify specific needs from the San Luis Valley Healthcare Coalition.

CCHN wrapped up the workshop with a discussion around challenges for ancillary partners being included in regional disaster response planning. The feedback collected during this session will be used to inform future planning efforts in the San Luis Valley Healthcare Coalition.

CCHN staff is extremely grateful for the Valley-Wide team and their strong relationship with the San Luis Valley Healthcare Coalition. If you have questions or would like to learn more about your regional Healthcare Coalition, [email Emily Bauer](#).

Northwest Colorado Health Celebrates 15 Years

Northwest Colorado Health will be celebrating its 15th Anniversary as a Community Health Center during National Health Center Week this year.

On Dec. 11, 2008, *Craig Daily Press* published an article about the CHC on opening day. Then Health Center Director, Gisela Garrison, remarked: “Our biggest emphasis is to become a medical home for the people who haven’t gotten care” “Affordable health care is a large issue in Moffat County, Garrison said, especially for the 29 percent of local residents who earn 200 percent or less of the federal poverty guideline, according to 2005 census data.”

All these years later, Northwest Colorado Health serves as the primary care home for over 6,000 patients, according to data from 2022.

Celebrations will include a staff appreciation breakfast and giveaways on Patient Appreciation Day. Elected officials have been invited to visit with staff and patients to celebrate and recognize 15 years of service to the Northwest Region of the state.

Suicide Prevention Training at Pueblo Community Health Center

Providing suicide prevention training to all new staff across all departments has been a top priority for Cindy Jimenez LCSW, director of integration & behavioral health at Pueblo Community Health Center (PCHC). So far, she has trained 200 PCHC staff members.

The training program is from QPR Institute. QPR stands for Question, Persuade, and Refer, the three simple steps anyone can learn to help save a life from suicide. Just as people trained in CPR and the Heimlich Maneuver help save thousands of lives each year, people trained in QPR learn how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to question, persuade, and refer someone to help.

The program was first developed by Dr. Paul Quinnett in Washington state in 1995. The mission of QPR Institute is to save lives and reduce suicidal behaviors by providing innovative, practical, and proven suicide prevention training. The QPR team believes that quality education empowers all people, regardless of their background, to make a positive difference in the life of someone they know. QPR training has spread internationally and there are over one million people trained, Ms. Jimenez has been a trainer since 2006.

“Teaching and inspiring professionals and lay folks when and how to ask the suicide question is something I am passionate about because just like CPR, you can only do what you know at the time of crisis,” said Ms. Jimenez. “For suicidal crisis, there is so much more that can be done and save lives.”

To learn more about the training available, visit the [QPR Institute website](#).



Cindy Jimenez LCSW, Director of Integration & Behavioral Health at PCHC.

IRCNoCo Joins Sunrise Community Health

The Immigrant and Refugee Center of Northern Colorado (IRCNoCo) has joined Sunrise Community Health. IRCNoCo assists refugees and immigrants by connecting communities and advocating for successful integration into our Northern Colorado community.

“Sunrise and IRCNoCo have a long history of collaboration. By aligning our programming formally, we can better meet the needs of the people we jointly serve. I am excited to see this collaboration elevate services at both organizations,” shared Mitzi Moran, Sunrise’s Chief Executive Officer.

Equity is at the heart of Sunrise and IRCNoCo’s missions; both recognize the importance of patient and community empowerment, health education, workforce development, and advocacy on behalf of those we serve. Together, IRCNoCo and Sunrise will continue striving to make Northern Colorado a more equitable home – for all who live there.

CKF Update

Covering Kids and Families Update

Covering Kids and Families (CKF), a project of CCHN, is working to improve how Coloradans access and retain affordable health coverage.

Over the past several months, CKF has supported CHCs in understanding, preparing for, and managing the unwind of continuous coverage, and renewals for Health First Colorado (Colorado’s Medicaid program) and Child Health Plan *Plus* (CHP+). Continuous coverage was established in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, and meant Health First Colorado and CHP+ members would remain enrolled in coverage regardless of changes to income. The year-long unwind is the process of verifying eligibility for all members, and keeping them enrolled in coverage if they are eligible, or disenrolling them. The unwind is confusing for many Health First Colorado and CHP+ members and enrollment staff, and has already had a big impact on how Coloradans access health coverage. CKF is supporting CHC enrollment staff by providing updated information on changing policies and procedures, and advocating issues to the state. CKF has worked with CHC staff during triannual meetings, monthly support calls, and individual problem-solving.

In May, CKF published a manual that is a trustworthy, updated, and easy-to-read source of information on Health First Colorado and CHP+. Topics, which previously were not all available in one place, include eligibility, application process, enrollment, remaining enrolled, renewals, and more. CKF has shared this manual with CHC enrollment managers and other health coverage assisters from across the state.

CKF spent three years contributing to the modernization of PEAK, Colorado’s online application and management system for public benefits. In June, the final stage of modernization, the Application, launched. CKF staff focused on using plain language principles to make it easier for applicants to understand what is being asked of them. CKF also connected with CHC enrollment staff and other health coverage assisters to ensure their feedback was incorporated into the new application.

In the coming months, CKF will continue to support assisters in ensuring Coloradans eligible for health coverage are able to easily enroll and stay enrolled.

CCHN Updates

New Staff – Emily Krizmanich

Emily Krizmanich is the Workforce Specialist at Colorado Community Health Network. She joined CCHN in May 2023 to support efforts to develop the next generation of the CHC workforce and recruitment and retention of the current workforce. Ms. Krizmanich earned two bachelor's degrees in international affairs and anthropology from the University of Colorado Boulder and a master's degree in international development with a graduate certificate in global health from the University of Denver. In her free time, Ms. Krizmanich loves traveling, spending time outdoors with her partner and rescue pup, volunteering, trying new gluten-free finds, and watching Colorado football.

New Staff – Lex Miller

Alexis “Lex” Miller is the Quality Initiatives Specialist at Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN). She joined CCHN in June 2023. Her primary responsibilities are to provide practice transformation coaching to Community Health Centers (CHCs) and assist with their behavioral health, oral health, and cancer screening initiatives. Ms. Miller earned her Bachelor of Science in exercise science from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and her Master of Public Health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Ms. Miller spent three years working with Labcorp in their drug development department in Durham, N.C. As a passionate mental health advocate, Ms. Miller has volunteered with Breaking Taboo and Safe Alliance.

New Staff—Gustavo Tinoco

Gustavo Tinoco is the Health Center Operations Coordinator at the Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN). Mr. Tinoco joined CCHN in June 2023 to provide technical assistance, training, data analysis, and other resources to Community Health Centers (CHCs) and other partners in the areas of operational and financial systems, workforce development activities, and community development activities. Mr. Tinoco earned two bachelor's degrees in integrative physiology and psychology from University of Colorado Boulder in 2019 and is currently on track to obtaining a master's degree in health administration from Metropolitan State University of Denver at the end of 2023. In his free time, Mr. Tinoco enjoys spending time with family and friends, engaging in outdoor activities, and volunteering at CHCs.

Upcoming Events

NACHC Community Health Institute 2023

The 2023 Community Health Institute (CHI) of the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) will take place Aug. 27-29. The event is hybrid, with the option to attend in-person in San Diego, Calif. [Learn more and register](#) on the NACHC website.

NWRPCA/CHAMPS Annual Primary Care Conference

The annual Primary Care Conference of Northwest Regional Primary Care Association (NWRPCA) and Community Health Association of Mountain/Plains States (CHAMPS) will be held in Seattle, Wash., from Oct. 21-24. The multi-day in-person conference hosts networking events, educational sessions, prominent keynote speakers, and sponsorship opportunities. The educational tracks include board governance, clinical, financial, healthy communities, human resources & workforce, leadership, operations, and policy. Visit the CHAMPS [Annual Primary Care Conference](#) to learn more, and for information regarding [registration](#), [hotel accommodations](#), and [reimbursement opportunities](#).

July 2023 Newsletter Contributors

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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 for more than 832,000 of their community members – more than one in seven people in Colorado - from 63 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 <https://cchn.org/>.



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