

WISCONSIN COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Lawmaker Updates & Resources
February 2021



WPHCA is proud to serve the 17 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) also known as Community Health Centers (CHCs) in the state of Wisconsin.

Community Health Centers around the state have been working hard to provide care to their community members during the current pandemic. This newsletter includes information on Community Health Centers' priorities, resources, and stories from patients and centers. Please do not hesitate to reach out to [WPHCA](#) with any questions, concerns, additional information, and constituent support.

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Check out WPHCA's social media for more updates and information!



WHAT IS A COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER?

Health Resource Services Administration (HRSA) - supported Community Health Centers provide comprehensive primary and preventative health care services, which include medical, dental, behavioral health, and substance use care, plus connections to enabling and social services. Community Health Centers are:

- Private or public not-for-profit
- Located in or serving high need communities
- Governed by a patient-majority board of directors
- Providers of supportive services that promote access to health care
- Providers of services to everyone, with fees adjusted based on a patient's ability to pay.

HEALTH CENTER SPOTLIGHT: NEW Community Clinic (Green Bay)

NEW Community Clinic patient, Laura, attended appointments with clinic provider, Katie Collins, APNP, regularly for 14 months. Katie provided routine care, urgent care, and medication management, as well as vouchers to Streus Pharmacy, to assist with payment for prescription medication.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND A COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER?

Community Health Centers are located across the state of Wisconsin, from urban

Additionally, doctors provided necessary documentation to assist her in obtaining a power wheelchair. Case management provided Laura with bus passes to assist with transportation related to medical appointments or arranged transportation if she did not feel comfortable taking the bus.

Laura was referred to Outreach Healthcare, by NEW Community Shelter, in April of 2019. She moved into the shelter in mid-April after relocating to the area from Nevada. Her initial appointment was scheduled for a TB test, which is required for residency at the shelter. During the initial appointment, several other needs were identified. Laura reported diagnoses of: rheumatoid arthritis, COPD, diabetes, and hypertension. She used a manual wheelchair at this time, due to a lower leg amputation. She also needed multiple medication refills.

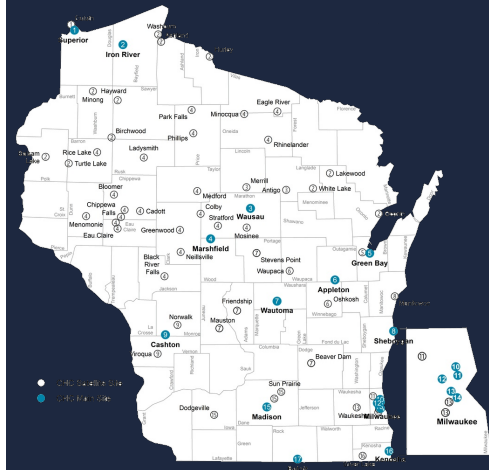
Laura transitioned quickly between housing opportunities. She stayed for three months on the shelter's third floor, living in a room with seven other women. In June of 2019, Laura moved to the shelter's second floor, into her own transitional apartment. In August of 2019, Laura was approved for housing assistance. She found an apartment in September of 2019, and she has been living there ever since.

In June of 2020, after her successful shift into independent, stable housing, the clinic referred Laura to Bellin for primary care services. She remains connected to a primary care provider there, as well as several specialty providers.



areas in Milwaukee and Madison, to rural areas in the North woods and central Wisconsin.

[Find a Community Health Center here or visit the WI CHC map.](#)



[Access](#)

[Bridge](#)

[Beloit CHS](#)

[Family Health Center of Marshfield](#)

[Family Health/La Clinica](#)

[Gerald L. Ignace Indian Health Center](#)

[Kenosha](#)

[Lake Superior](#)

[Lakeshore](#)

[Milwaukee Health Services, Inc \(MHSI\)](#)

[N.E.W.](#)

[Northlakes](#)

[Outreach](#)

[Partnership](#)

[Progressive](#)

[Scenic Bluffs](#)

[Sixteenth Street](#)

WI HEALTH CENTERS

RESPOND TO COVID-19

Wisconsin's 17 Community Health Centers (CHCs) responded swiftly and efficiently to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Health Centers quickly operationalized telehealth services, emergency dental services, telephone triaging, respiratory clinics, testing capabilities, and COVID response lines while continuing to care for the most vulnerable patient populations and supporting the management of their chronic diseases. Health Centers provided care for patients while protecting the safety of their providers and continued to increase support to the communities they serve. See below for additional information on Community Health Centers and COVID-19 recovery, including needed legislative action. Health Center focus areas include telehealth, PPE, dental operations, special populations, social determinants of health, testing, tracing, and workforce.

All 17 of Wisconsin's Community Health Centers are registered vaccinator sites. The only two exceptions are Family Health Center Marshfield who is receiving their vaccine directly from Marshfield Clinic and Gerald L Ignace Indian Health Center who is receiving vaccines directly from the federal Indian Health Services. Health Centers have started to vaccinate staff, patients, unaffiliated health care providers, and many are working with community partners to vaccinate populations/patients outside of their clinic.

COVID-19 RESPONSE & RECOVERY

Health Centers Receive Vaccines – And Prepare for the Work to Come, Direct Relief

Dr. Lyle Ignace, chief executive officer of the Gerald L. Ignace Indian Health Center in Wisconsin, was particularly enthusiastic about the vaccine's ability to reduce hospital admissions and fatalities in patients over the age of 65. "This could be an absolute game-changer," he said. "This is the group that's going to need to be prioritized over all other populations because of their higher risk of severe and poor outcomes."

Ron Yee, chief medical officer at the National Association of Community Health Centers, explained that health centers would play an important role in two key issues related to the distribution efforts: vaccine hesitancy and vaccine equity.

"These are two different concepts, but important ones," he said. "We need to ensure that underserved communities that have been hard hit by COVID have enough doses of the vaccine to stop the spread. We also have a lot of work to do to ensure that people feel safe in taking the vaccine by providing culturally and linguistically appropriate messaging around the safety of the COVID vaccine."



Dr. Lyle Ignace, chief executive officer of the Gerald L. Ignace Indian Health Center in Wisconsin, receives his first dose of Covid-19 vaccine. (Photo courtesy of the Gerald L. Ignace Indian Health Center)

HEALTH CENTER SPOTLIGHT: FAMILY HEALTH CENTER of MARSHFIELD

Providing care to Veterans in need of Dental Care

In December, Family Health Center of Marshfield, Inc. (FHC) received a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) to establish a fund for the provision of financial assistance to low-income Veterans in need of dental care. Few Veterans enrolled in Veterans Affairs (VA) health care have dental benefits and County Veteran Service Officers routinely describe access to affordable dental care for low-income Veterans as one of the greatest health-related challenges they face.



FHC has worked closely with Veteran Service Organizations across the state to increase awareness of and access to dental care for Veterans. Although FHC Dental Centers routinely provide care for Veterans, out-of-pocket dental expenses remaining after application of the oral health services sliding fee discount for patients at or below 200% of federal poverty level or even the nominal \$10 fee for those at or below the federal poverty level can remain a challenge. This is particularly true for Veterans who exist at the intersection of multiple vulnerable subgroups, such as those for whom oral disease is a barrier to work, the disability community, individuals with emergent dental needs, patients with significant medical comorbidities, and the elderly. This additional financial assistance for Veterans unable to pay out-of-pocket expenses will increase access to affordable dental services for Veterans across the state of Wisconsin. Depending on the population served and treatment

needs encountered, we anticipate being able to serve at least 40 Veterans using grant funds, but likely many more. A virtual award presentation with leadership from the Governor's office and the WDVA was held on December 18, 2020.

WPHCA'S 2021 Policy Priorities

As the backbone of the health care safety net, health centers provide cost-effective primary and preventive care that helps people get and stay healthy. But what you might not know is that health centers don't just keep people healthy: they also help create a healthy economy. WPHCA has focused on 5 policy priorities at the state and federal level that would help increase access, care, and support for the communities that health centers serve.

2021

Policy Priorities

WISCONSIN PRIMARY
HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATION



CHCs, WPHCA PROVIDE TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 59: AN INCREASE TO COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER GRANT

On Tuesday, February 9, four local Community Health Center leaders offered virtual testimony in support of Senate Bill 59 (SB 59)/ Assembly Bill 66 (AB 66). The bill would increase funding for the Community Health Center State Grant that supports access to care for underserved populations across Wisconsin.

During the hearing, Community Health Center leaders highlighted clinic responsiveness to meeting local community needs. The State Grant is a flexible funding tool which allows Community Health Centers to rapidly assess and address priorities, from COVID-19 response to expanding behavioral health treatment.

SB 59: Increase to the State Community Health Center Grant



THE ISSUE

Community Health Centers have increased the number of patients, the amount of services provided, and service locations, but the Community Health Center State Grant has remained the same since 2008.

THE WHY

Health Centers use flexible state grant funds to make significant impacts in every community they serve. These improvements include increasing access to oral health care, particularly for vulnerable populations, continuously reinvesting in innovative quality improvement activities, broadening access to substance use disorder treatment and mental health services, and improving access to preventive care and chronic disease management. Community Health Centers are also able to use this grant to address social determinants of health, which improves the potential for patients to move from Medicaid to private insurance.



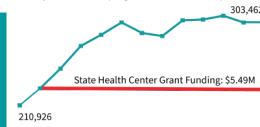
THE DATA

- Total patients served increased by 44% from 210,926 in 2008 to 303,462 in 2019.^{1,2}
- The number of dental patients more than doubled from 61,575 in 2008 to 172,487 in 2019.^{1,2}
- Health Centers continue to expand services and hire providers for mental health and substance use disorder services.
- Since 2008, Community Health Centers have hired 133 additional Behavioral Health providers.^{1,2}

THE SOLUTION

The Wisconsin State Legislature passes SB 59: An Increase to the Wisconsin Community Health Center State Grant. This legislation would increase the State Grant by \$2M annually and would allow Health Centers to reach even deeper into the communities they serve while adapting to address state health priorities.

Total patients served increased by 44% from 210,926 in 2008 to 303,462 in 2019.^{1,2}



Brian Ahlgren, Chief Financial Officer at NorthLakes Community Clinic, shared, "Since 2016, we have increased our patient panel by 7,000 Wisconsinites and added new services such as our Recovery Program helping state residents with opiate and other addictions. The state grant allows us to adapt to evolving patient and community needs, such as funding our school-based oral health

program and expansion to WIC offices, nursing homes, and childcare centers. This program supports nearly 17,000 residents, mostly children, with their oral health needs and education.”

“In 2020, we adapted quickly to meet the needs of patients during the COVID-19 pandemic, including implementing a COVID-19 vaccination services. To date, we have vaccinated our staff and provided the initial vaccine dose to half of our patients who are 65 years and older. With your support, this increase to the State Grant would allow us to broaden access to Substance Use Disorder treatment and develop additional pathways for patients to receive more intensive mental health services, or increase oral health care to over 2,000 people in rural communities” advocated Joanne Holland, Chief Financial Officer, Access Community Clinics.

WPHCA Press Releases

DID YOU KNOW?

Wisconsin's 17 Community Health Centers served over 300,000 patients in 2019. Including:



6,929
INDIVIDUALS
EXPERIENCING
HOMELESSNESS



4,325
SCHOOL-BASED
PATIENTS



3,656
VETERANS



1,282
SEASONAL
AGRICULTURAL
WORKERS

To see more data on Wisconsin Community Health Centers check out our most recent [UDS Brochure](#).

WI Community Health Centers by the numbers

HEALTH CENTER SPOTLIGHT: Lakeshore Community Health Care, Sheboygan

Improving Outcomes with Whole Patient Care

In the spring of 2021, Lakeshore Community Health Care will partner with Concordia University, Meals on Wheels and Northeast Wisconsin Area Health Education Center (NEW AHEC) on a pilot program that was cut short by COVID in 2020.

A small group of diabetic patients with difficulty keeping their A1C

(average blood sugar) levels in a healthy range, will be “prescribed” 90 days of nutritious, medically tailored meals prepared by Fresh Meals on Wheels of Sheboygan County. Nursing, pharmacy, and athletic training students and faculty from Concordia University will attend three in-home visits to track and record vital signs, including A1C levels.

The goal is to help patients achieve healthy A1C levels and learn which foods and portion sizes are best for a healthy diabetic diet. Participants’ A1C levels decreased or remained the same in the initial trial.

Fresh Greens & Nutrition Education

Last summer, UnitedHealth Care donated a hydroponic Flex Farm system from Fork Farms to Lakeshore Community Health Care, allowing them to grow fresh greens for patients at their Sheboygan clinic.



Each month the mixed greens, healthy salad additions and tips to maintain a healthy diet are shared with patients. Volunteers deliver the items to patients or they are picked up at the clinic. It has been a way to engage patients in a healthy diet and offer fresh greens to those in need of additional food.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS IN THE NEWS



Officials hope new drive-up testing site will offer insight into combating COVID-19 in Kenosha County. WTMJ Milwaukee



Milwaukee health systems, community health centers say they'll contact their patients about getting COVID vaccine. Milwaukee Journal Sentinel



Care for your heart this month and every month. Waushara Argus

HEALTH CENER SPOTLIGHT:

Partnership Community Health Center, Appleton Area - Project H.O.P.E.

Engaging students and families from local school districts in health insurance coverage and health care has been a longstanding strategy for Partnership Community Health Center.

Building on our active collaboration with the Appleton Area School District, Project H.O.P.E (Health Outreach, Prevention, and Education) supports students and families with the healthcare and social services needed for both school and life success. Partnership's team works to increase access to care and remove barriers for low-income and high-risk students around transportation, access to food, and lack of insurance. As a result, many underserved children and families have improved health outcomes through this innovative program.

"Partnership helped me get my teeth fixed so I could smile when I graduated."

This work is core to Partnership's mission of "Making a difference in the lives of people; Creating a healthy community."

"Without insurance, I could not pay for my child's mental health meds. The school and health center got me connected so my student was back in school!"
-Partnership Patient

What We're Watching in the Biennial Budget

This year, WPHCA has identified several items that would directly benefit Community Health Centers and our patients. We anticipate prioritizing the following items throughout this spring's budget process:

- **\$2 million annual increase to the Community Health Center State Grant** (also a standalone bill);
- **Expanding behavioral health and Substance Use Disorder services**, including the focus on school-based services;
- **Ensuring fair protections and ending price discrimination** for entities such as Health Centers that participate in the 340B Drug Pricing Program; and
- **Improving access to dental care** through licensing Dental Therapists and funding loan forgiveness for dentists practicing in rural areas.

We are also celebrating multiple health equity initiatives including:

- **Broadband investment** and infrastructure expansion to

ensure all Wisconsin residents have access to affordable high-speed internet which is a key factor for effectively deploying telehealth;

- **Healthy Moms Healthy Babies provisions**, including expanding Medicaid coverage to pregnant women one year post-partum (current coverage is 60 days);
- **Childcare initiatives** that would afford families new options for early childhood education;
- **Community Reinvestment Fund, Community-based equity initiatives, and a Community Health Benefit Wavier** which would provide funding for efforts to expand Community Health Worker models and advance work to address social determinants of health such as housing and food insecurity.

If you have questions about these initiatives and their potential impacts on Community Health Centers and their patients, please reach out.

THANK YOU!

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