



NEWS RELEASE

Central Ohio Pathways HUB Addressing Health Disparities Amplified During COVID-19 Pandemic

May 19, 2020 – COLUMBUS, Ohio – For over a year, the Healthcare Collaborative of Greater Columbus (HCGC) has operated the Central Ohio Pathways HUB (the HUB), a nationally certified care coordination model for Franklin and contiguous counties. The HUB model is utilizing 12 care coordination agencies (CCAs) that assess medical, behavioral, and social risks for our most vulnerable neighbors and connect them with community resources to mitigate those risks. The HUB currently serves more than 900 clients, of which 80 percent represent minority or foreign-born populations.

Disparities Among Vulnerable Populations Amplified During Pandemic

While vulnerable populations often experience disparities, the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified disparities among underserved communities in the region and in communities where the HUB is currently serving clients. HUB community health workers (CHWs) have been reporting increases in patient check-ins with their clients since the pandemic took hold in Ohio. They transitioned from in-person visits to virtual visits to help protect the safety of both the clients and CHWs.

In addition to the several pathways, or connections to care, that CHWs typically open with clients, there has been an exponential growth in education pathways regarding COVID-19 related measures, such as understanding stay-at-home orders, hand washing, navigating telehealth appointments, and what to do if clients or their family members become ill. Now, more than ever, CHWs are finding themselves advising and connecting clients to important information on health insurance enrollment (including Medicaid), unemployment benefits, career education, food assistance, and guidance on attending prenatal and other preventative healthcare appointments.

“We are grateful to our local and state officials who have called for a renewed focus on racial, cultural, and economic disparity in light of how COVID-19 is disproportionately affecting people,” said Carrie Baker, HCGC President and CEO. “We are committed to providing the data necessary to increase equity, while simultaneously preparing our community health workers to support and protect our growing number of clients. CHWs are already trusted, reliable caretakers in their communities, and they work for some of the most incredible agencies in central Ohio, bravely navigating the front lines of this pandemic. CHWs can not only help find, report, and decrease the spread of COVID-19, but also support clients hardest impacted by the pandemic to recover from the health and economic perspectives.”

Here's What We're Seeing

- **An increase in clients:**

Prior to COVID-19, new client enrollments were holding steady at around 65-75 clients/per month. In April 2020, that number jumped to 88.

- Since October of 2019, there has been a, 80.9% increase in new clients per month.
- Since March 2019, there has been a 145.4% increase in new clients.

- **An increase in specific pathways:**

Since April 2020, pregnancy and food assistance have been the most frequently opened pathways.

- **An increase in completed pathways:**

Prior to COVID-19, completed pathways were holding steady at around 460-470/per month. In March 2020, that number jumped to 500.

About HCGC and the Central Ohio Pathways HUB

As one of over 30 Regional Health Improvement Collaboratives (RHICs) across the country, the Healthcare Collaborative of Greater Columbus is a neutral, safe space collective impact 501c3 nonprofit that brings together providers, hospitals, social service agencies, public and private insurance, employers, government, public health, patients, and consumers to improve the quality, delivery, and value of healthcare and the overall health for all people in the Columbus region. HCGC provides data, facilitation, quality improvement coaching and technical assistance to its partners in Central Ohio. HCGC's Central Ohio Pathways HUB has been in operation since January of 2019, began serving clients in March 2019 and became nationally certified in November 2019. HUB CHWs are employed by 12 agencies in Central Ohio, each sub-contracted with the HUB, to operate a standardized risk mitigation/care coordination model. HUB agencies include Franklin County Public Health, Union County Public Health, OhioHealth, The Columbus Urban League, The Breathing Association, Wellness First, LLC, CelebrateOne, Physicians CareConnection, PrimaryOne Health, Heart of Ohio Family Health Centers, Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services-ETSS, and Urban Strategies. The HUB enables these agencies and their CHWs to reduce variation and duplication of services and be reimbursed for outcomes by completing "pathways." Pathways address all aspects of health, social services (including food, transportation and housing needs) as well as adult/career education, insurance and employment attainment. For more information, visit: www.hcgc.org.

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