

Spotlight on the Safety Net

A Community Collaboration
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Community Health Network of Henderson County

In the southwestern corner of North Carolina, local health and social service providers have joined into the Community Health Network of Henderson County (CHN). Community Health Network is a network of providers who access a shared client information system (Case Management Information System – CMIS). That system was adapted by Partnership for Health, Inc (PFH), 5 Rivers Systems, the NC Foundation for Advanced Health Programs, and the Office of Rural Health and Community Care to meet the network's needs. The CMIS electronically links health care providers and human services agencies in a 3-county area in western North Carolina to share client protected information to better serve clients, reduce duplication of efforts and services among various social service agencies and health care providers, and decrease gaps in access to services for low-income people in the Hendersonville-Brevard-Saluda area. The CMIS shared electronic database provides access to resource information used to quickly assist low-income people in finding health care, medications, and other basic human needs.

The collaboration began in 1997 when a post graduate resident physician in the Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC)-sponsored Hendersonville Family Medicine Residency Program started a free clinic for homeless clients at the Henderson Rescue Mission. In 1998, MAHEC provided a licensed physician as the medical director for the Henderson County Health Department. This forged a unique relationship between the two organizations. As they encountered difficulties with mental health reform and expanded coordination with a local community health center, more stakeholders began working collaboratively. A Healthy Communities Access Program (HCAP) grant from the Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA) was applied for and received to fund the CHN program under the umbrella of Partnership for Health (PFH), a Healthy Carolinians Partnership.

From its simple beginnings, CHN now includes more than thirty partners and is a model of community collaboration. Of 2157 applicants to the network program, 1929 have been enrolled in the network at the 15 enrollment sites. Although CHN does not provide direct services, the member organizations offer a variety of services in 9 primary care sites and 5 integrated behavioral health care sites. More than 4000 prescriptions valued at \$400,741 have been filled for 742 patients. The target conditions of the program are diabetes, depression, and asthma, and more than 40% of the over 1900 CHN enrollees are affected by one of the 3 conditions. The full list of CHN members are listed in the table to the right.

When asked to describe the Community Health Network of Henderson County, medical advisor Steve Crane, MD, shared these thoughts, "Over the years there has been an extraordinary degree and breadth of cooperation between agencies and individuals in our community who care about access and quality of our health system. Each success has fostered a new project or collaboration resulting in today's multi-faceted approach. I trace the kernel of these efforts back to Jim Bernstein, who encouraged and mentored many of us to move in this direction."

Primary Care

Blue Ridge Community Health Services, Inc.
Foothills Medical Associates
The Free Clinics of Henderson County
Henderson County Department of Public Health
Hendersonville Family Health Center
Hendersonville Family Health Center—Etowah Clinic
Hendersonville Rescue Mission
Saluda Medical Center
Springs Health Care Center
Valley Family Health

Mental Health Care

Appalachian Counseling Families Together, Inc.
Family Preservation Services
Parkway Behavioral Health

Emergency & Inpatient Care

Margaret R. Pardee Memorial Hospital
Park Ridge Hospital
St. Luke's Hospital
Transylvania Community Hospital

Other Support

Access II Care of Western North Carolina
Community Care of North Carolina
El Centro Comunitario
Henderson County Government
Henderson County Department of Social Services
Interfaith Assistance Ministry
Land of Waterfalls Partnership for Health
North Carolina Foundation for Advanced Health Programs, Inc.
Partnership for Health
Polk County Dept of Public Health
Thermal Belt Outreach Ministry
Transylvania County Health Department