

ACA OUTREACH AND ENROLLMENT THROUGH COMMUNITY HEALTHCORPS

A Tale of Three Health Centers

By *Bethany Hamilton*

As implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) moves forward, community health centers all over the country are adjusting staff roles and bringing in new support to increase outreach and enrollment assistance activities in their communities. Building upon their experience with the well-established and successful AmeriCorps program, whose Community HealthCorps Members have supported previous enrollment efforts around CHIP, Medicaid, and Medicare Part D; some health centers are choosing to tap into this unique source of human capital for outreach and enrollment efforts under the ACA.

Over the next year NACHC will follow the stories of three community health centers that plan to utilize Community HealthCorps Members as a primary human resource in their ACA outreach and education efforts. In the beginning, of this story at least, each health center's plans begin with a blueprint...



The City of Angels (Los Angeles, CA):

“Giving the gift of healthcare to the communities we serve one person at a time...”

—Steven Abramson of ChapCare, a member of CICALAC.

The Community Health Alliance of Pasadena, or ChapCare, is a member organization of the Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County (CICALAC). With the Community HealthCorps

members provided through CICALAC playing an active role in providing ACA outreach and education to the public, ChapCare is leading a Los Angeles countywide campaign called *Cover LA* (endorsed by CICALAC with funding from L.A. Care Health Plan).

ChapCare opened a new health center this summer in the city of South El Monte. Located in Los Angeles County, the new site was funded by a 2012 New Access Point (NAP) federal grant award. The organization also received a 2013 NAP award to open another site in the city of El Monte. Within this area, there are over 50,000 low-income individuals who are currently not accessing healthcare because they are uninsured and/or they are not aware of available healthcare services. ChapCare's Community HealthCorps Members will provide outreach, education, and enrollment services in the El Monte/South El Monte region.

Educating community residents about the ACA is a new function within ChapCare's outreach department. While the *Cover LA* initiative will provide very broad information about the insurance options available under the ACA and what resources are available, it is the Community HealthCorps Members who will provide community residents more intensive education about their health insurance options and how to enroll.

ChapCare's Community HealthCorps Members will focus on the El Monte region, while ChapCare outreach staff will focus on the Pasadena area. Community HealthCorps Members will also recruit additional volunteers through a recruitment project to enhance outreach, education, and enrollment capacity in this new service area.

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Deep in the Heart of Texas (Waco, Texas)

“With wishful thinking and high hopes we would like to reach everyone in McLennan County and provide as much assistance as possible...”

—Janice Chase, PHR, FACMPE, of Heart of Texas Community Health Center

The Heart of Texas Community Health Center (HOTCHC) in Waco, TX has provided primary healthcare services to the residents of McLennan County, TX since 1970. It is the oldest family medicine residency west of the Mississippi, serving the target population of 90,200 residents of McLennan County.

HOTCHC's ACA outreach plans are still a work in progress – a statement likely to be echoed by many in the field. It has however already received certification as an official Marketplace Outreach and Enrollment Center and is close to hiring staff thanks to a federal outreach and enrollment grant it received this summer.

Nearly half of HOTCHC's 22 Community HealthCorps Members will be certified this fall to help residents of the McLennan County community understand the enrollment process and begin enrolling in the health insurance exchange. HealthCorps Members currently assist patients with Good Health Card screenings, which is HOTCHC's discounted fee services program. The goal is to have a one-stop shop where clients can enroll in programs and learn about all of their options as they relate to the state's exchange.

These same Members will also work with diabetic patients through a chronic disease management protocol on an individual basis to assist each with regulating their diabetes, provide educational materials and healthy recipes, and set up personalized self-management goals. Because they have direct access to the patients as they enter the health center, HealthCorps Members serve as a welcoming face and are able to provide assistance during the most trying of times.

Since April of this year, HOTCHC's Community HealthCorps Members have provided support during the West Recovery Phase following the tragic fertilizer plant explosion that occurred in the area on April 17th. The health center is considering a longer-term placement with the West Long Term Recovery Center to enroll eligible clients into the Good Health Card program and provide information about the state's health insurance exchange.



A Small Town in New Jersey (Dover, NJ)

“The help that AmeriCorps Community HealthCorps members will provide is expected to significantly increase our ability to assist our patients (72% of whom are uninsured) in accessing coverage for medical services...”

—Eva Turbiner, President and CEO of Zufall Health Center

Momentum continues to build as Zufall Health Center gears up to conduct outreach and enrollment activities; linking its patients and the community-at-large across northwestern New Jersey to insurance options now available under the ACA. The health center's service area contains some of New Jersey's most concentrated minority populations and the health center's patient population is 78% ethnic-minority. In providing eligibility and essential translation services, the health center will serve as a culturally sensitive source of information and support for the community.

Zufall's two-part process of in-reach and out-reach:

1. In-reach to Zufall's low-income, predominantly minority patient population, will include assisting unique “special populations” including isolated public housing residents, and the homeless, in navigating the health care system, and educating those with greatest need about the benefits now available through expanded Medicaid in New Jersey or right-fit insurance plans available for purchase through the new ACA health insurance exchange.
2. Outreach to the community at large, educating young and old about the new law, the value of health insurance, their options and how the enrollment process works. It is a broad-scale public health education effort that has caused Zufall's outreach department to more than double its size, expanding to include a new ACA Coordinator, three new certified application counselors and a team of eight Community HealthCorps Members.

Community HealthCorps Members will help to expand Zufall's reach beyond its current outreach capacity. All Members will participate in the training to become certified application counselors. After open enrollment closes in March 2014, HealthCorps Members will develop and implement a curriculum on how to use health insurance benefits as part of the center's focus on financial health literacy.

Follow the progress of these three health centers in their outreach and enrollment efforts at <http://communityhealthcorps.wordpress.com/>.