



partners

At the heart of the Health Center Program is a unique partnership that emerged 50 years ago between the federal government and medically underserved communities.



*f*rom the very first federal health center grants in the 1960's — to the enhanced investment in recent years through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) — this mutually beneficial relationship has not only survived, but thrived. Today, community-based health centers serve over 24 million people — or one in 14 Americans — in more than 9,000 communities nationwide. At the same time, the federal government has supported through health centers the delivery of cost-effective, high quality healthcare to the country's most vulnerable communities and populations.

in mission

While the federal government plays a major role in ensuring a productive citizenry, there remains a need for broader healthcare alliances in both the public and private sectors to strengthen the delivery of quality healthcare – especially to the medically underserved. For that reason, NACHC actively pursues and nurtures such partnerships to support the health center mission. Partnerships not only with governments, but also with charitable institutions, foundations, businesses and others, make available significant resources to help support and strengthen the nationwide network of community health centers.

A Healthier Community Is Everybody's Business

Part of what allows a partnership to flourish is that both partners benefit. “Given the size of our patient population,” says Malvise Scott, NACHC’s Senior Vice President of Partnerships and Resource Development, “health centers represent an excellent opportunity to fulfill their philanthropic and civic engagement goals by providing resources to organizations whose patients are in need.”

One of NACHC’s longest-standing partners is **Pfizer**, which makes available free Pfizer medications to low-income and uninsured health center patients. Also, since Hurricane Katrina struck in 2009, NACHC has maintained a strong relationship with **Direct Relief**, an international relief organization that has extended the full force of its charitable programs in the U.S. to ongoing support of community health centers and other safety net providers, especially when disasters strike.

Henry Schein’s Global Donation Program is yet another NACHC partnership, providing health centers with medical and dental supplies and supporting community health screenings. **AmeriCares**, an emergency response and global health organization, also supports the work of health centers in a number of communities with an array of medications and supplies.

Through NACHC’s partnership with **Becton Dickinson**, community health centers are provided medical supplies, primarily pen needles and syringes for low-income diabetic patients. Becton Dickinson has also

established an awards program that recognizes health centers that have developed innovative approaches for the treatment of diabetes. Another valuable partner, the **CVS Health Foundation**, provides grants to health centers for innovative approaches in the treatment of chronic diseases, including diabetes, hypertension, asthma, and comorbidities. Grant funding from the CVS Health Foundation along with **IBM** is assisting health centers in increasing the utilization of patient portals by training health center staff and marketing the portals to patients.

In a healthcare environment increasingly dependent on technology to deliver more cost-effective, higher quality services, health centers don’t always have adequate resources to access and gain its full benefits. One of NACHC’s newest partnerships with the not-for-profit technology firm **CareMessage** is providing a solution to select federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), FQHC look-a-likes and health center controlled networks which are participating in a project that provides them a web-based patient engage-

partners in mission

ment platform enabling health centers to better connect to patients by sending reminders about flu shots, appointments, health fairs, and prescription refills.

Also helping to bridge the technology gap for health centers is NACHC's partnership with the **Imaging for a Cause Foundation** (a part of the Center for Diagnostic Imaging). The foundation has launched a pilot program that will donate imaging services to qualified uninsured, low-income health center patients.

Poor health and chronic illness can often stem from negative social conditions — such as housing discrimination, unsafe living environments or denial of insurance coverage — which may first require legal care before medical care. For that reason, NACHC works with the **National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership** (MLP) which brings together the medical

and legal communities to address social conditions that impact and influence health. To date, 140 health centers have developed MLPs.

Also, a two-year old partnership between the federal **Consumer Financial Protection Bureau** (CFPB) and NACHC's Community HealthCorps program has brought financial literacy services to nearly 35,000 health center patients across the country.

Applying Science at the Healthcare Frontlines

The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (CDC) is well known for its expertise in epidemiology and surveillance activities related to diseases and conditions such as HIV, hepatitis, stroke, Ebola and more recently, the Zika virus. Under the leadership of CDC Director Tom Frieden, there is now increased recognition within the agency of the importance of prima-

ry care and the benefits of aligning primary care with public health to effect greater change in health outcomes for the country's populations.

That recognition has influenced the CDC's development of collaborative relationships with leading primary care organizations such as NACHC. The NACHC-CDC partnership has enabled the agency to tap into America's health center network and by extension into the delivery of healthcare to the 24 million patients health centers serve.

"Our CDC partners are the experts technically and scientifically — they're the ones who do the global studies," says Dr. Ron Yee, NACHC's Chief Medical Officer. He points out that the CDC knows technically the best way to approach and treat a disease, but it may not always have a vehicle to get the science behind it implemented in the field. Yee says that's where health centers come in because they



The bottom line is that partnering with NACHC helps the CDC get its information out to communities and to take action.”

Sam Taveras

Associate Director for Partnerships with the CDC's Office for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Support.

are the experts in the front-line care to underserved populations. They know how to reach their patient populations and they understand the language and cultural barriers to healthcare access. “When you put the two of us together,” says Yee, “you really can have a big impact on many populations.”

“The government can’t do it all by itself,” says Sam Taveras, Associate Director for Partnerships with the CDC’s Office for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Support. “When we partnered with NACHC we looked to them as an organization that facilitates the opportunity for us to integrate public health with clinical care.” He also notes that the partnership with NACHC also offers the CDC access and reach to over 20,000 clinicians.

“The critical value,” continues Taveras, “is the extensive experience that community health centers have in primary care and public health services on the ground. To some extent it’s very unique — we have other partners that offer us other

things, but not the on-the-ground ability that the association has through its members and constituents. The bottom line is that partnering with NACHC helps the CDC get its information out to communities and to take action.”

NACHC is working with the CDC on several healthcare initiatives ranging from improving screening of colorectal, cervical, and breast cancer, to improving the health and well-being of the LGBT population.

The goal of one of the CDC’s largest health programs — Million Hearts® — is to prevent one million heart attacks and strokes nationwide by 2017. (To achieve that goal, the CDC is also working with numerous other health groups in addition to NACHC.)

Another effort made possible through the CDC-NACHC partnership places current clinical guidelines from the CDC in the “cloud” and synchronizes them with patient health records. Cloud-based guidelines help clinicians make decisions

more quickly, which ultimately benefits patients and health outcomes.

Working with the CDC on the national level has spurred NACHC to develop partnerships with other organizations on a state and local level, such as the YMCA and local and state health departments. Through its partnership with the LGBT Extension for Community Health Outcomes (ECHO) program, which aims to improve health outcomes while delivering culturally-competent care to the LGBT population, NACHC is now working with academic institutions and STD clinics.

“We are now connecting those dots that historically have not been connected in a cohesive way to improve the health and well-being of our communities,” says Kathleen McNamara, NACHC’s Associate Vice President for Clinical Affairs. “Through partnerships come new opportunities for quality improvement in health.” ♦