



Hawai'i Primary Care Association

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Community Health Centers: A Model for Hawai'i

Community health centers (CHCs) are increasingly meeting many of Hawai'i's emerging needs for high quality, convenient, accessible health care. CHCs, which are independent, community-governed nonprofit organizations, serve federally designated underserved areas or communities with significant numbers of people who are underserved by virtue of economic, cultural, or geographic barriers. Hawai'i's 13 CHCs are the state's largest system of primary health care, collectively caring for 100,000 people on five islands. In 2008, a 14th CHC will open to serve Lāna'i.

Multi-faceted community health centers are of interest to the public and policy makers for several reasons:

- **Access to care for all with special services for special populations. Hawai'i CHCs currently serve less than 25% of the population that is uninsured and less than 20% of Med-QUEST beneficiaries.**
- **Growth and stability in an era of increasing needs and decreasing health resources.**
- **Comprehensiveness of services and advanced systems to ensure quality.**
- **Reduction of overall costs due to preventive services and chronic disease management.**
- **Workforce and community economic enhancement.**

How Community Health Centers Meet Hawai'i's Needs

No provider is better able to meet the needs of our rapidly changing health care economy than a community health center. CHCs are stable nonprofit, community-based organizations that provide quality, comprehensive primary care to all people – rich or poor – in the community.

CHCs offer health care stability

Community health centers are nonprofit corporate models providing a stable infrastructure for quality assurance, practice and administrative management, continuity of care, and accountability to the community. While practitioners may come and go, CHCs remain and ensure continuity of care. The stability of CHCs is supported by both a cost-effective model of care, including integration of non-physician providers in medical and behavioral health services, and by supports from the federal and state governments that include:

- Financial subsidies to serve the underserved;
- Enhanced payment levels for Medicaid and Medicare;
- Federal tort claim coverage in lieu of paying for professional liability insurance;
- The ability to purchase prescription drugs for patients at reduced federal prices;
- Eligibility for loan repayment programs; and
- State dental license provisions that enhance recruitment to CHCs.

Health Care Trends in Hawai'i

Hawai'i's population and health care environment are rapidly changing:

- More people are moving to rural and neighbor island communities.
- Health care providers in those same areas are retiring or moving away and aren't being replaced. Physicians and dentists who stay have full practices that cannot absorb more patients. As a result, doctors are less likely to accept emergency calls or hospital duties.
- The whole population is aging and more frequently suffers from chronic diseases. This trend is more marked in many rural areas which have disproportionate numbers of elderly, Native Hawaiians, and lower income residents.
- Besides the population whose access to care is limited by a shortage of available providers, an estimated 120,000 Hawai'i residents are uninsured and more than 200,000 are enrolled in Med-QUEST. Both groups have trouble finding available health care providers and are more likely to use emergency departments for primary care needs.
- Provider resources are increasingly strained as medical schools produce too few primary care providers to meet the demands of underserved areas and federal loan repayment programs are insufficient to meet Healthcare Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) needs in Hawai'i.

CHCs serve special populations

CHCs are available to all community residents regardless of income or insurance status but they specialize in caring for people who otherwise don't fit into the mainstream health care system because they have complicated social and health care problems, need language or cultural support to make health care accessible, have no private insurance, and/or live in areas where it is not economically feasible for private practitioners to deliver care.

In 2006, the community health center patient profile was as follows:

29%	Native Hawaiian	10,700	were homeless
20%	Asian	71%	were below poverty
25%	Caucasian	74%	were rural
14%	other Pacific Islanders	26%	were urban
15%	needed interpreters	30%	were uninsured
		40%	had Medicaid or QUEST

CHCs provide comprehensive primary and preventive care

Community health centers operate fifty sites in areas where there are few other health care providers and where populations have economic and cultural barriers to care. They are the only logical kind of provider in communities where private practices aren't economically feasible because they welcome and provide equally good care to all, regardless of income or insurance status. All provide an array of medical and behavioral health services, most also provide dental care, and all provide other preventive and primary care services appropriate to the needs of their communities.

Additionally, CHCs add significant value to their clinical services by being models of culturally competent care, incorporating linguistic and culturally appropriate services with Western healing. To address the other needs that their clients have that affect health, CHCs also offer extensive services tailored to the needs of clients such as:

- Application assistance for Medicaid and other public benefits;
- Case management;
- Active, managed referral;
- Follow-up;
- Health education;
- Nutrition counseling;
- Wellness programs; and
- Transportation assistance, among others.

By means of their comprehensive clinical care and supplemental services, community health centers very effectively reduce unnecessary ER use and hospitalizations.*

CHCs provide high quality care

Unique among primary care providers, all community health centers in Hawai'i are actively engaged in a quality improvement and monitoring initiative sometimes known as "Health Disparities Collaboratives." Initially focused on better management of chronic diseases, the initiative has grown to include quality transformation in all aspects of clinical and management services at CHCs.

As most CHCs will have incorporated better electronic health records and management systems in the near future, health centers and the Hawai'i Primary Care Association are working together on processes to produce outcome data on standardized measures. The Hawai'i Primary Care Association also provides CHCs the advantage of training and technical assistance for a variety of needs; a venue for executives, clinical directors, and other key staff at CHCs to meet, share, and collaborate; assistance in growth planning and implementation; and advocacy for policy and funding needs to support the medically underserved.

CHCs are economic engines that support the livability of communities across Hawai'i

Community health centers serve areas where there are high proportions of economically and culturally disadvantaged residents and few business assets. CHCs make these communities livable by making health care available and directly and indirectly supporting jobs. In 2006, CHCs in Hawai'i directly contributed \$84 million to the economy and employed 1,040 people while the ripple effect of the health centers' presence amounted to \$168 million and 1,768 jobs.

CHCs expand the health care workforce

Hawai'i – and the whole country – faces health care workforce shortages. Hawaii is at a particular disadvantage because of our high cost of living and low unemployment rate. CHCs contribute to solving workforce needs in several ways:

- **Teamwork.** CHCs use an integrated approach to care that maximizes resources and excellence through a team approach that includes physicians, nurse practitioners or physician assistants, nurse midwives, psychologists, and social workers.
- **Training.** CHCs are sites for training professional and support staff of all kinds, some of which are: community health workers; medical and dental assistants; students of social work, nursing, and medicine; medical and dental residencies; internships for psychologists, pharmacists, and public health administrators.
- **"Grow Your Own" Programs.** CHCs encourage residents of underserved communities to consider health care careers and make these ambitions come true. They invite students in high school, and younger, to explore futures as health professionals or in supporting roles. They also provide career ladders and in-service training to help staff members advance, add to competencies, and increase earnings.
- **Recruitment Incentive Programs.** CHCs have a competitive advantage in recruiting health care professionals of all kinds through the National Health Service Corps and the Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program. These programs usually involve repayment of student loans or community service commitments in exchange for scholarships.

* According to *"Inequality in America: The Contribution of Health Centers in Reducing and Eliminating Health Disparities in Access to Care."* [Medical Care Research and Review](#), June 2001, **Community health centers provide high quality care and save the system money:**

- Medicaid patients served by community health centers are 22% less likely to be hospitalized for avoidable conditions.
- Community health centers save the Medicaid program 30% in annual spending, per beneficiary, due to reduced specialty care referrals and fewer hospitalizations and emergency room visits.
- Uninsured adults who go to community health centers are more likely to get counseling on diet, exercise, smoking, substance abuse, and STDs.
- Women who go to community health centers are significantly more likely to get mammograms, clinical breast exams, and Pap smears.

Complete List of Community Health Centers

Kaua'i:

Ho'ōla Lāhui Hawai'i/Kaua'i Community Health Center David Peters, CEO, 246-3511

O'ahu:

Kalihi-Pālama Health Center	Emmanuel Kintu, CEO, 791-6315
Kōkua Kalihi Valley	David Derauf, MD, Exec. Dir., 791-9415
Ko'olauloa Community Health and Wellness Center	Chuck Braden, Exec. Dir., 293-5377
Wai'anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center	Richard Bettini, CEO, 696-1457
Waikīkī Health Center	Sheila Beckham, Exec. Dir., 791-9302
Waimānalo Health Center	May Akamine, Exec. Dir., 954-7107

Moloka'i:

Moloka'i Community Health Center Jina Lee Lawler, Exec. Dir., 553-5038

Lāna'i:

Lāna'i Community Health Center Don Toews, Exec. Dir., 565-6919

Maui:

Community Clinic of Maui	Dana Alonzo-Howeth, Exec. Dir., 873-6300
Hāna Community Health Center	Cheryl Vasconcellos, Exec. Dir. 248-7515

Hawai'i:

Bay Clinic	Paul Strauss, CEO, 934-3206
Hāmākua Health Center	Susan Hunt, Exec. Dir., 930-2721
West Hawai'i Community Health Center	Richard Taaffe, Exec. Dir. 326-5629

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