

..... **West Hawai'i Community Health Center**
(Island of Hawai'i)



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Overview—West Hawai'i Community Health Center (WHCHC) opened its doors in January 2005 when it took over the Kona Community Clinic, a free medical clinic previously operated by the Salvation Army. Planning to develop a Community Health Center in West Hawai'i began in September 2002 and was spearheaded by a large group of community leaders and community members who organized a grass-roots effort. Their action resulted in the incorporation of the WHCHC as a not-for-profit organization in November 2003 dedicated to providing affordable health care to the low-income, uninsured, and disadvantaged residents of West Hawai'i. Effective January 1, 2006 WHCHC received its designation as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) and federal funds to support this mission.

WHCHC serves a rural service area that stretches approximately 80 miles along the west coast of the island of Hawai'i and 6 miles inland. It has a diverse geography with many small isolated communities connected by rural, country roads that go over mountainous terrain creating long travel times for relatively short distances. The population of West Hawai'i is 44,248.

Services—WHCHC currently offers family-oriented primary medical services that consist of acute and chronic care, family planning, prenatal care, pediatric care, adolescent health, adult and geriatric services, and outreach. As a relatively new Community Health Center, WHCHC is still growing and is planning to establish comprehensive dental care within the next year, as well as integrating behavioral health into its family-oriented primary care services. Case management and pharmacy services will soon follow.

Special Populations/Health Issues—Low-income families, Native Hawaiians, immigrants, homeless, uninsured and under insured. The ethnic distribution of West Hawai'i is similar to the

entire state, although there is a high percentage of Hispanic immigrants from Mexico who work on the coffee farms. There is also a growing population of homeless and a recent in migration of Marshallese. Significant barriers to care include lack of money; lack of insurance coverage; inability to find providers who will take low income, indigent or publicly insured patients; lack of transportation; and culturally diverse beliefs about health care. The overall poor health profile for the area has a higher-than-average percentage of teen births, poor prenatal care, higher-than-average infant mortality, low immunized rate and high tooth decay among children ages 5-9. Other health issues include high rates of asthma, diabetes, obesity, unintentional injury deaths and the highest use of “ice” in the State of Hawai‘i.

Patient profile for 2006 Ethnic groups served: Caucasian (46%), Asian (16%). Native Hawaiian (14%), Latino (11%)

- Unduplicated Patients2,658
- Patient Visits5,672
- 19 years of age and under 25%
- 65 years of age or older 4%
- Female..... 52%
- Uninsured..... 42%
- Medicaid 34%
- Medicare 5%
- Patients best served in a language other than English 18%
- Patients with an income less than 200% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL)..... 87%

Federal Designations
MUP and Dental HPSA