Health Center Stories Guidance

# Health Center Stories Project

Health Center Program award recipients do phenomenal work in their communities, and the Bureau of Primary Health Care wants to share information about their efforts! We post stories on our [Health Center Stories webpage](https://bphc.hrsa.gov/technical-assistance/health-center-stories) and share shorter versions on HRSA’s social media accounts, through our newsletters, in webinars, during presentations at conferences and other places as space allows.

# Aspects of a Strong Story

BPHC welcomes story ideas that you find particularly interesting or noteworthy. Please especially consider sending us a lead if you come across any of the following:

1. A particularly innovative idea
2. An impressive success metric
3. A quote from a patient or staff member
4. A high priority for BPHC (e.g., mental health, maternal health, pediatric vaccinations, etc.)
5. A clear photo that features only health center staff (it is easier for us to get photo releases from staff than patients) *Note: We publish many stories without photos; they are not a requirement. Email us if you need a release form.*

# Information to Send

# If you have a lead for an outreach and enrollment related story, please send it to [HealthCenterStories@HRSA.gov](mailto:HealthCenterStories@HRSA.gov). They will review, connect with you on any questions, and more fully develop the story. *Important notes: We are looking for leads, not complete stories. HRSA will highlight as many stories as possible but cannot guarantee placement.*

Please include as much of the following information as you can:

1. Name of the health center or look-alike
2. A point of contact from the center or look-alike
3. Description of target population, service area, and data showing the scope of needs and challenges related to conducting outreach and enrollment activities.
4. Description and inclusion of data that illustrates the innovative approaches to conducting outreach and enrollment activities and other key services.
5. Links to any related news stories that have appeared in local media

Health Center Stories Examples

**Expanding Mental Health Services for Children**

[Genesee Health System](https://www.genhs.org/), a public mental health service provider, recently opened a new center dedicated to children’s mental health.

The Flint, Michigan center recently received a financing boost from the local government that is expected to increase revenues by nearly $10 million annually.

Genesee experienced soaring demand for mental health services in the wake of Flint’s well publicized water quality crisis, which involved high levels of lead in the drinking water supply. The water crisis combined with COVID-19 infections increased demand for services even more. These developments helped people to overcome reluctance about seeking mental health services, said Dan Russell, Chief Executive Officer at Genesee. “That helped to reduce the stigma.”

The increased demand for services got local health providers thinking about proposing a millage tax increase that would provide more funding. “We did take the bold step of asking people to pay more in the middle of a pandemic,” Russell shared.

Local voters approved the idea in 2021, and the increased funding, along with other sources, is allowing Genesee to expand services and outreach efforts. One recent addition is a 60,000-square-foot Center for Children’s Integrated Service, which is focused on children’s mental health needs. Development of the center allowed Genesee to consolidate services that had been in three separate locations. The facility includes a large learning center for children with autism and a Neurodevelopmental Center of Excellence that provides neuropsychological assessments for children exposed to lead in Flint water.

Genesee provides mental health services to about 12,000 people a year, and about 55% of them are adults. Unlike many health centers that have traditionally started by offering primary care and adding mental health services, Genesee started as a mental health provider and eventually added primary care. The new children’s center offers mental health services and will expand to provide primary care this year.

**Health Center Expands Telehealth Access Through Digital Literacy Program and Kiosks**

The [Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center](https://www.wcchc.com/) serves approximately 38,000 patients who are predominantly Native Hawaiian on the rural western coast of Oahu, Hawaii. Telehealth technology could increase access to care, but Waianae patients face barriers around digital literacy and Internet access: many Hawaiian elders, known as “Kupuna,” are not comfortable using web-based applications; patients have an average annual household income of under $18,000, making it difficult to afford data plans; and some areas of Waianae have limited access to broadband services. Through the support of HRSA’s [Optimizing Virtual Care (OVC)](https://bphc.hrsa.gov/funding/funding-opportunities/optimizing-virtual-care) grant, Waianae launched innovative telehealth solutions to overcome these barriers and expand access to care.

To improve digital literacy and increase comfort with using web-based applications and telehealth platforms, Waianae launched a specialized training program for older adults.  The health center created it to be completed in one session and offered transportation to the Kupuna from their community to the training site in order to reach as many people as possible. Additionally, through a new community partnership, Waianae provided a free refurbished laptop to each participant at the completion of the program. A total of six sessions have been offered and 65 participants have completed the program.

In addition, to expand access to high-speed Internet for telehealth services, Waianae placed [telehealth kiosks](https://www.wcchc.com/COVID19/Safety) in two of their satellite locations. The kiosks have computers and video cameras, allowing patients to connect with providers at other sites. Since the launch of the first kiosk in May 2022, Waianae has conducted over 250 social service encounters and telehealth visits through the kiosks. The health center is also working to develop and introduce a community access web-based application called Comp Health Connect, which will connect patients with a broad range of social and community services.

Overall, more than half of Waianae patients now have access to telehealth services thanks in large part to these innovative solutions. A Kupuna who completed the program shared, "Mahalo for the refurbished laptop. Mahalo for feeding us. Mahalo for providing Navigators to help us, and we needed lots of help! Mahalo for your Aloha and patience. You helped make our lives better."

**Events Draw Patients Back to Texas Health Center**

Special family events drew people back to [Su Clinica](https://www.suclinica.org/) following a decline in patient visits during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In October, the Harlingen, Texas health center offered healthy treats and encouragement for children to come dressed in costumes during a weekend close to Halloween. Entire families, many of whom were tired of feeling cooped up, took advantage of the opportunity to have some fun and connect with the clinic. “Kids hadn’t been out much,” said Dr. Elena Marin, Chief Executive Officer.

The Halloween bash and a subsequent Spring into Summer event helped staff to develop a list of patients who were behind in vaccinations.

Increasing HPV vaccination rates among girls and women was one of the successes. Blanca Cavazos, Su Clinica’s Women’s Health Center Manager, said the events gave center staff an opportunity to catch up on cervical cancer screenings as well. “Most of the women we saw had not had a cervical cancer screening in three-to-five years,” she said.

Cervical cancer rates are higher in the area, which is close to the border with Mexico, than elsewhere in Texas. Su Clinica has a longstanding relationship with the MD Anderson Cancer Center at the University of Texas and provides treatment of early cases of cervical cancer.

The HPV vaccination push is one of several efforts that promotes women’s health. Su Clinica also has an extensive midwife service that offers one-on-one relationships with expectant mothers. The midwives work with patients through the course of the pregnancy and accompany them when they go to a hospital to help with delivery. This service, which has been available for years, is popular and helps to draw new patients. “It was a huge attraction for our community,” Cavazos said.