

LOAN REPAYMENT and STIPENDS

STATE STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT THE DENTAL CARE WORKFORCE IN HEALTH CENTERS



SECURE

Partnering with the Medicaid Managed Care Organizations to Recruit, Retain and Expand the Dental Workforce



Health Center Association
OF NEBRASKA

ORGANIZATION

**HEALTH CENTER ASSOCIATION
OF NEBRASKA**

LOCATION

**OMAHA,
NEBRASKA**

HEALTH CENTERS
IN STATE

7

STATE POLICY LEVER

Nebraska Medicaid Managed Care Organizations Fund FQHC Dental Workforce Development Efforts

SUCCESS FACTORS

- HCAN oversees the program steering committee, which is responsible for maintaining contracts, managing funds, and evaluating the program
- Flexibility in health center hiring strategies yields maximum impact

POSITIVE OUTCOMES:

- Four new dentists hired
- Additional evaluation in progress

THE CHALLENGE

Nebraska's federally qualified health centers experience many challenges with dental workforce recruitment and retention. In many rural and frontier Nebraska communities, FQHCs are the only provider actively accepting Medicaid patients. This results in delays in preventive care and early interventions. Medicaid patients are often left to seek care from emergency departments in lieu of more appropriate care, which leads to limited post-discharge follow-up. Because each health center's needs are unique, a solution that maximizes flexibility and facilitates innovation is essential.

STATE POLICY/STRATEGY

In 2022, Project Access was established to provide Nebraska FQHCs with flexible funding to expand and enhance access to quality, community-responsive care unique to their communities. Thanks to this initial funding from Nebraska Total Care (a subsidiary of Centene) and the Centene Foundation, Project Access was developed as an innovative means to increase access to care throughout the state. Since this time, additional Nebraska Medicaid Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) have come to the table and pledged a portion of their profits to aid the Nebraska FQHCs, their workforce, and their local communities. As the state Primary Care Association, HCAN oversees these relationships, governs the Project Access Steering Committee, and completes required monthly, quarterly, and annual reporting for all funders and partners.

STATE POLICY/STRATEGY IN ACTION

The Project Access Steering Committee (Committee) comprised of CHC Executive Leaders, MCO Funder Representatives, and non-voting HCAN staff, leads Project Access. The Committee establishes program objectives, sets measurable goals, reviews quarterly progress reports, and governs the overall vision, budgeting, and direction of the program. Funding distributions include individual health center distributions, timelines for spend down, HCAN overhead funding, and details behind the distribution formula. This formula accounts for the wide variations in health center volume. Each of Nebraska's seven health centers receive a base amount of funds annually, with additional supplemental funds allocated based on patient volume. A major strength of Project Access is the minimal administrative costs which allow the majority of funds to be used directly by Nebraska's community health centers in dental recruitment, retention, and expansion efforts.

The key areas of partnership engagement, as defined by the Project Access Steering Committee, are recruitment and retention, clinical optimization, capital improvements, and pipeline development. Sign-on bonuses, retention bonuses, wage support or incentives, loan repayment matches, and additional educational needs are all allowable under Project Access.

THE IMPACT

Since its inception in early 2022, the impact of Project Access on Nebraska Community Health Centers has exceeded expectations. In 2023, Project Access funding resulted in the hiring of four dentists, three medical providers, one behavioral health provider, and retention incentives to at least 400 health center staff. As a testament to the success of this program with Nebraska Total Care, another MCO, UnitedHealthcare

Community Plan of Nebraska, has joined Project Access to support this work in community health centers. Additional positive outcomes, not outlined above, are available in [HCAN's 2023 Project Access Impact Report](#). Impact reporting serves to strengthen HCAN's quantitative evaluation efforts and will serve as justification for continued funding.

“Since its inception in 2022, Project Access has made a fundamental difference in expanding access to health care in Nebraska. At a time when community health centers are facing critical workforce challenges, the [MCO partners] invaluable financial backing has proven indispensable in staff recruitment and retention efforts. Project Access serves as a national model for the direct impact innovative partnerships between providers and plans can have on improving access to high quality, culturally appropriate care for all.”

AMY BEHNKE, HCAN CEO

“On behalf of the community health centers in Nebraska, we would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the Centene Foundation and Nebraska Total Care for your commitment to Project Access. This kind of support has been game changing for Heartland Health Center as we have been able to add some great additional providers to our team, as well as focus on retention efforts for the great team we already employ. As a rapidly growing health center in rural Nebraska Project Access has allowed us to enhance our offer for positions that otherwise are very difficult to fill on a timely basis.”

TAMI SMITH, HEARTLAND HEALTH CENTER CEO