



WellSpace Health, Sacramento, California



Introduction

Community health centers provide comprehensive primary and prevention services in medically underserved areas and communities. Collectively, they serve more than 28 million people at 11,000 sites located throughout all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. territories. Health centers provide care to all individuals, regardless of their ability to pay. All health centers provide a full range of primary and preventive services, as well as services that enable patients to access health care appropriately (e.g., translation, health education, transportation). A growing number of Health Centers also provide dental, behavioral health, pharmacy, and other important supplemental services.

Founded in 1953 as a behavioral health services and crisis prevention agency, WellSpace Health (WSH) has been providing essential health services to the most underserved community members of the Sacramento region for more than 65 years. A Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) since 2009, WSH operates 22 community health centers in three counties across the Sacramento region, providing medical, pediatric dental, women's health, behavioral health, and immediate care services for approximately 80,000 patients annually. Linkage to behavioral health care is integrated into all of WSH's services and programs.

Enabling services are a central component of this care model, which has earned WSH accreditation by the Joint Commission for both Ambulatory Health Services and Behavioral Health. They are certified by the Joint Commission as a Primary Care Medical Home and Behavioral Health Home. WSH is the only FQHC in California to earn this dual distinction. In addition, they are the National Institute for Health's only FQHC research site using their early psychosis detection screening.

With enabling services strategically placed to connect, support, and advocate for patients throughout their health care journey, WSH offers a wraparound system of care. This "blanket of care" approach embraces the whole person and addresses patient needs through a holistic approach.

Types of Enabling Services Provided

Supporting Care Transitions

Central to WSH's enabling services program is its HART (Health, Access, Referrals, and Transitions) case management services, which center around connecting patients to care. HART teams work in many different settings and with multiple target populations, serving individuals with varying levels of complexity and acuity. Their common purpose is to make care transitions happen smoothly for every patient. Case managers provide care coordination and navigation services, such as referral management, eligibility and enrollment, and traditional case management.

Behavioral Health Screening

Screening and linkage to behavioral health services is a core component to WSH's HART services and is also integrated into other clinical departments. Patients are screened for behavioral health needs at every primary care and psychiatric visit, and receive response from WSH's suicide prevention services if they are reported having suicidal thoughts. A care coordinator administers behavioral health screenings and an onsite behavioral health clinician is staffed at WSH sites where patients regularly present with severe mental health needs.

WELLSPACE HEALTH AT-A-GLANCE

Number of Patients Seen Annually: 80,000

Staff: 900

Staff providing Behavioral Health Services: 156 FTE

Locations: 22 community health centers, 4 immediate care centers, plus mobile units and residential locations

Geography: Urban, suburban, and rural

Service Area: Sacramento region (Sacramento, Amador, Placer)

Payor Mix: Medicaid, Self-pay

Intensive Case Management

Patients with more extensive case management needs are supported by the T3 Program — Triage, Transport, and Treat. T3 case managers are embedded within regional emergency departments, where they target high utilizers and help them navigate outpatient care. The program is not time-limited and there is no deadline that dictates when case management must end. Patients enrolled in T3 are assisted by a long-term case manager for as long as they need support.

Substance Use Disorders

Treatment WSH offers a continuum of services for those struggling with substance use and co-occurring mental health disorders. Multiple levels of care are available to provide the right treatment for each individual situation. Services include outpatient, detoxification, residential, and medication-assisted treatment (MAT). Additionally, WSH provides co-occurring services to individuals within the criminal justice system through partnerships with the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office and Sacramento County Probation.

Suicide Prevention

WSH also has a history of statewide leadership on suicide prevention. The health center operates the region's Suicide Prevention Crisis Line and acts as first and secondary responders to the National Suicide Hotline in 50 California counties. Crisis line support is provided in multiple languages and by voice, text, or chat. WSH also receives automatic and immediate notifications when patients indicate suicidality in internal Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ) screenings or emergency department admission screenings, so that crisis line staff can respond immediately follow up. WSH estimates that 15 percent of its callers have a plan and means to end their life. For these calls, the responder's goal is to successfully intervene with the caller, link them to follow up care and services, and stay connected with the individual for the next month. The crisis line is staffed by CHWs and volunteers who complete a 50 hour training curriculum. Staff are supervised by a program manager, who also leads suicide prevention and Mental Health First Aid trainings throughout the Sacramento region.

Street Medicine

As a Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) 330(h) grantee, WSH has a robust and innovative set of services for individuals experiencing homelessness. Homeless patients are one of the T3 program's primary target populations. WSH also staffs a Street Medicine program with registered nurses and CHWs who engage with chronically homeless individuals to build trust, provide immediate medical care, and support linkage to a wide range of services, including mental health care and substance use disorder treatment.

“At our community health centers, folks aren't just coming in with bruises, they're coming in with severe behavioral health needs that require care. The root of enabling services for us is finding funding for those services.”

**Christie Gonzales, Director of Behavioral
Health Operations
WellSpace Health**

Respite and Recuperative Services

People experiencing homelessness need a place to go when discharged from the hospital while still recovering from an illness, procedure, or injury. To address this critical need, WSH partnered with the region's hospital systems and a local shelter to open Sacramento's first medical respite center. The Interim Care Program (ICP) provides lay-in nursing and intensive case management for patients discharged from the hospital for up to three months. Located at a local shelter that provides room and board, WSH offers two tiers of care for ICP patients based on the needs of each patient. ICP provides up to six weeks of room and board along with case management services such as transportation to follow-up visits, document readiness services, and linkage to housing services. For patients with more serious needs, ICP + provides up to three months of intensive case management and nursing services. Both tiers of ICP care center around the goal of maximizing opportunities to stabilize patients during their recovery.

Whole Person Care Pilot

WSH's most recent expansion of services for community members experiencing homelessness is through California's Section 1115 Medicaid Demonstration Waiver "Whole Person Care" pilot, which targets high-utilizers of emergency services for intensive case management and supportive services. The City of Sacramento's Whole Person Care program provides comprehensive enabling services to Sacramento's most vulnerable individuals experiencing, or at-risk of experiencing, homelessness. Referred to locally as Pathways to Health + Home, WSH's participation includes providing clinical care coordination services as part of interdisciplinary Pathways Care Teams and serving as the medical home for Pathways enrollee. WSH will also expand medical respite care for homeless patients discharged from area hospitals through the program.

Workforce and Infrastructure

WSH has been at the forefront of recent efforts to create professional standards for enabling services roles. Recently, the health center partnered with Los Rios Community College District in Sacramento to create the Community Health Worker Certificate of Achievement Program. The program has developed CHW certification standards and curriculum,

creating a pipeline of qualified staff for WSH and the many other health providers in the Sacramento area that have a growing need for CHWs.

WSH emphasizes that finding a cultural fit is as important as a candidate's credentials and qualifications when staffing enabling service roles. Job candidates shadow an employee in the role they are applying for as part of their interview process to deepen their understanding of the role. Applicants for enabling service roles such as case managers have a diverse set of qualifications, which can range from Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselors, previous experience as CHWs or case managers, or a bachelor's degree.

Funding and Partnerships

Local, state, and federal partnerships are a primary driver of funding opportunities for WSH's enabling services. WSH's enabling service programming is supported by two HRSA 330 community-based grants. The health center also partners closely with hospital systems and local government, as well as other regional FQHCs and social service agencies. Their partnerships with local, state, and federal policymakers strengthen Medicaid and enabling service programs, and also help legislators understand the human impact of the programs they support.

Concluding Thoughts

By focusing on enabling services that meet patients where they are and support community members in crisis, WSH provides comprehensive behavioral health care extending far beyond billable clinical services. Their "blanket of care" model maximizes community members' opportunities to be linked and engaged with services that meet their needs. WSH's enabling services ensure that patients of all levels of acuity are able to access comprehensive behavioral health supports and are an essential contributor to WSH's success as an accredited Behavioral Health Home.

NACHC Mission Statement

To promote efficient, high quality, comprehensive health care that is accessible, culturally and linguistically competent, community directed, and patient centered for all.

For more information about this case study, contact:

Ted Henson
Director, Health Center Performance & Innovation
National Association of Community Health Centers
thenson@nachc.com

Acknowledgements:

NACHC thanks the following individuals/organizations for their authorship and contributions to this case study:

- The authors of this case study, the **Transform Health** team: : Lisa Chan-Sawin, CEO; Heather Bates, COO; Margaux McFe-
tride, Senior Consultant; Alexis Sabor, Program Coordinator; Kristine Gual, Project Director.
- **WellSpace Health**, an FQHC in Sacramento, California.
- The **Health Resources and Services Administration** (HRSA) for their support of this project.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
Community Health Centers®

7501 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 1100W
Bethesda, MD 20814
Telephone: 301-347-0400
Fax: 301/347-0459
www.nachc.com

This project was supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under cooperative agreement number U30CS16089, Technical Assistance to Community and Migrant Health Centers and Homeless for \$6,375,000.00. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

NACHC TRAINING & TA
Innovative Learning. Effective Results.