

Mary's Center

Social Drivers for Social Change - Forming Partnerships for Lifelong Learning

ABOUT MARY'S CENTER

Mary's Center was founded by Maria S. Gomez along with a group of health advocates and the DC Mayor's Office on Latino affairs in 1988 when the group recognized the need for healthcare and support for immigrant women fleeing Central America to seek a better life for themselves and their families. While Mary's Center started in a small basement by providing pre-natal and infant healthcare, they realized there were more needs that they could support. To support these needs, Mary's Center formed a partnership with Briya Public Charter School. With this partnership, Mary's Center provides comprehensive services in addition to healthcare including daycare, job skills, and English classes. This partnership exemplifies lifelong learning and they continue to develop programming by assessing for and responding to the needs of their community.

SCREENING FOR SOCIAL NEEDS & UNDERSTANDING PATIENTS' SOCIAL NEEDS

Mary's Center uses PRAPARE®, a national screening tool and approach to collect standardized social needs data to better understand the patients' social needs and transform their care. PRAPARE® consists of a set of national core measures as well as a set of optional measures for community priorities. It was informed by research, the experience of existing social risk assessments, and stakeholder engagement. For more information about PRAPARE®, visit www.prapare.org.



Many of the patients of Mary's Center have trauma from escaping civil war in Central America or dangerous situations which impacts several aspects of their healthcare. Recognizing this, Mary's Center worked to better understand what those needs are through screening. Patients, especially pregnant patients, complete a risk assessment at their first appointment to help the staff at Mary's Center identify what interventions are necessary and to discuss appropriate services with the care team. Through the knowledge gained through this process, Mary's Center created a social change model that integrated their medical, social, and educational services to best serve their patients. This process highlights the importance of integrating services, focusing on social drivers of health and providing holistic care for patients, and was even studied by the Urban Institute. The findings of the Urban Institute study focused on how the integrated model is further supported by strong partnerships, such as Mary's Center's partnership with Briya Public Charter School. This partnership helped to reduce barriers to care and provide access to services for many of the patient's needs, from childcare to computer skills. The team at Mary's Center works together to better understand how these needs change over time as they review annual Social Drivers of Health (SDOH) patient screening and project developments from their partnership with Briya.

HEALTH CENTER RESPONSE TO PATIENTS' SOCIAL NEEDS

Mary's Center has worked for many years to build networks and support groups to best serve their patients. This was accomplished through analyzing results from SDOH screenings and by using their integrated care

model to build trusting relationships with patients so they feel comfortable sharing their needs. Recognizing that education and childcare were greatly needed, Mary's Center created their partnership with Birya Public Charter School and formed youth and adult learning groups that have childcare included. This encouraged patients to continue to seek help at Mary's Center by reducing barriers to care and gave them the opportunity to go to the next level to care for themselves and their family with reduced fear and stigma. Similarly, Mary's Center has also seen a lot of success with their after-school program that helps high school seniors prepare for and get accepted into college. Not only did this improve access to higher education for disadvantaged youth, the program also helped them to gain a sense of belonging and safety and supported reaching out to Mary's Center for further help when needed. Additionally, as Mary's Center saw that many immigrant patients were struggling to find work due to their immigration or document status, they created a daycare education program that taught these patients how to operate a daycare, including CPR training. Mary's Center has had patients in the daycare program from infancy into adolescence, demonstrating the trusted relationship and the impact of this program. Mary's Center continues to work closely with immigrant patients and continues to have conversations at the center to assess for their developing needs so they may create or reinforce partnerships or programs.



CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

More than challenges, Mary's Center believes they have opportunities. Through creating close partnerships, Mary's Center has been able to take advantage of several opportunities and learn best practices for working with and sustaining organizational partnerships. The partnership with Birya Public Charter School has had minimal challenges; the two have continuous communication to address any changes or arising needs in the community. However, Mary's Center acknowledges that it can be difficult to address everyone's needs, especially due to COVID. Some needed services aren't available right away or it may take time to find the right partner or organization to support patient needs. Mary's Center learned that the best way to address this is to involve all staff and to encourage staff to continue to engage with the integrated care model with their time, support, and resources. With this, Mary's Center was able to establish additional partnerships, for example with local legal services and an established cancer navigator, and find the experts of the field that best support their patients. Mary's Center looks forward to future opportunities and to continuing to create sustaining partnerships that uplift and address the needs of their community.