30 Oregon Health Centers Receive $23 Million as Part of CARES Act

More Funding Critical as Health Centers Face Financial Uncertainty Due to COVID-19 Pandemic

Portland, OR – It was announced Wednesday that 30 Oregon Community Health Centers (CHCs) will receive more than $23 million in federal funds to help health centers detect, prevent, diagnose, and treat those dealing with COVID-19, as well as maintain or increase health capacity and staffing levels to address this public health emergency. Awards in Oregon range from about $522,000 to a little over $1.7 million per health center.

Health center funding is being made available immediately, according to a news release from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health and Human Services (HHS). HHS, through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), awarded $1.3 billion to 1,387 health centers across the nation as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act.

“Oregon’s CHCs are appreciative for this supplemental funding during these unprecedented times,” said Joan Watson-Patko, OPCA’s Executive Director. “However, the fact remains that additional immediate emergency funding is essential in order to keep health centers open. Oregon’s health centers have stepped up to meet the needs of the communities they serve to care for patients in response to the COVID-19 crisis, and in doing so, face huge financial losses that could impact their ability to provide care. Recent analysis estimates the financial impact of COVID-19 to health centers in Oregon is over $57 million.”

White Bird Clinic in Eugene, for example, has stood up additional services and programs at significant cost and strain to existing operations. “Additional emergency dollars have made it possible for health centers to innovate and respond to their communities,” said Chris Hecht, executive coordinator at White Bird Clinic. “However, the investments made today do not support the long-term viability of community health centers. Our programs have reduced hours and services and we’re furloughing staff to support our response to the current crisis. When it’s over, many health centers may not have the resources to reopen closed programs.”

White Bird Clinic provides primary care and dental services, a drug and alcohol treatment program, crisis intervention, and homeless case management with priority to those who are unserved, underinsured, disabled and/or homeless. “Community health centers are uniquely positioned in the health care system to immediately respond to emerging community needs in a way that isn’t possible for our government or larger health system partners,” said Hecht.

Federal Community Health Center funding is set to expire on Nov. 30 without action by Congress. “Ensuring long-term stable funding for community Health Centers is critical so Oregon CHCs can continue to provide care now during this pandemic and in the future,” said Watson-Patko. “As part of the largest primary care network in the United States, our health centers remain committed to keeping their doors open and to providing care to people who may otherwise not have access to services and those hardest hit during economic downturns.”

About Oregon’s CHCs:
Oregon’s community health centers deliver integrated medical, dental and behavioral health services to many of the state’s most vulnerable communities through over 200 locations statewide. Over 430,000 Oregonians receive their care at a community health center, including one in four people on the Oregon Health Plan. Over 73% of patients live below the poverty line, and 94% live at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. Over 75% of community health centers have clinic sites serving rural communities, 30% of Oregon’s community health centers are federally recognized as Health Care for the Homeless locations, and 33% are designated as Migrant Health Centers. Find out more about Oregon’s CHCs here.
About OPCA:
OPCA is a non-profit membership association of Oregon’s 33 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), including one FQHC Look-Alike. The organization’s mission is to lead the transformation of primary care to achieve health equity for all.

OPCA believes all people, in Oregon and beyond, should have the chance to lead their healthiest lives and have access to equitable health care. Oregon Primary Care Association supports a network of community health centers that deliver exceptional health care to people in urban, rural and frontier communities who may otherwise not have access to services. By helping health centers apply innovative approaches to health care delivery and system challenges, OPCA is transforming primary care in Oregon and beyond. Follow us on Twitter: @OregonPCA or on Facebook.