

Grant Outcome Report

Preserving Health Care for Medically Underserved Communities in Central Harlem

The Problem

In early 2009, Columbia University announced its intent to close the Thelma C. Davidson Adair Community Health Center (Thelma Adair), located in the medically underserved community of Central Harlem. Longstanding and current gaps in health care services in the area include a lack of primary and specialty services; mental health counseling; dental services; substance use counseling and treatment; health education and disease prevention services; and referral services. Other barriers to care include lack of insurance coverage; linguistic and cultural differences; location and transportation issues; and a lack of awareness of available services. Without access to a regular primary care provider, vulnerable, uninsured, and underserved populations may seek routine health care in hospital emergency departments or not at all. At the time of the proposed closure, Thelma Adair was providing a high volume of service with up to 7,000 service encounters a year. Allowing Thelma Adair to close would have created a significant gap in health care capacity—current patients would lose their medical home and unmet community health needs would only have increased in this medically underserved area.

The William F. Ryan Community Health Center (Ryan) is part of the Ryan Network—a group of Manhattan-based community health centers that was founded to provide community health care in the most underserved neighborhoods of New York City. Ryan was in a unique position to take over Thelma Adair. The center was located in Ryan’s catchment area, and Ryan had a strong reputation for managing community-based health centers.

In December 2009, NYSHealth awarded a grant to Ryan to help ensure the smooth transition of Thelma Adair into its operations. The grant supported Thelma Adair in devoting clinical, medical, and program staff member time to start up the new site; developing community outreach activities; producing outreach materials; and covering clinical, laboratory, and pharmaceutical expenses.

KEY INFORMATION:

GRANTEE

William F. Ryan Community Health Center, Inc.

GRANT TITLE

Thelma C. Davidson Adair Community Health Center Acquisition

DATES

December 1, 2009 – June 15, 2011

GRANT AMOUNT

\$200,001

FUNDING

Special Projects Fund

Grant Activities and Outcomes

On July 1, 2009, Ryan assumed management and operations of the Thelma Adair site. Using NYSHealth grant funds, the site, now called Ryan/Adair Community Health Center (Ryan/Adair), hired a full-time, board-certified family practitioner to serve as the on-site supervising physician. Funds also were used to hire additional staff members, including a full-time dentist and dental assistant; a part-time physician; two full-time data entry clerks and one part-time data clerk; and two full-time licensed practical nurses. In addition, two AmeriCorps/Community Health Corps members were placed at the site to assist with community outreach and the insurance eligibility assessment process.



Most of the grantee's goals were met during the project timeframe, with two exceptions:

1. Ryan did not partner with Columbia University School of Dentistry (CUSD) on CUSD's dental fellowship program because it was unable to successfully negotiate a dental residency program that met Ryan/Adair's programmatic needs, as well as its financial parameters. This resulted in a loss of a projected full-time dental preceptor and two full-time dental fellows. Although anticipated dental visits were somewhat lower than originally projected by the end of the grant year, Ryan/Adair continues to collaborate with the CUSD on its ElderSmile program, which conducts outreach activities at senior organizations, and should help increase dental referrals and patient volume moving forward.
2. Ryan experienced challenges in identifying and recruiting a highly qualified full-time supervising family practitioner early in the grant period. Ryan/Adair did hire a provider in July 2010, but while other William F. Ryan practitioners were able to cover some clinical sessions in the interim, the absence of a full-time practitioner meant lower-than-projected medical encounters.

NYSHealth funding has had a significant, positive impact on the expansion of clinical capacity at this site. By the end of the grant period, Ryan/Adair had increased its volume of medical services by 30% for a total of 7,498 visits. During this same time period, Ryan/Adair provided 1,992 dental visits, an average 9% increase from November 2010.

During the grant period, Ryan reached out to community residents and organizations by distributing more than 10,000 flyers and other outreach materials. Ryan found that the cost of radio time was exorbitantly prohibitive; therefore, it focused on targeted print media and community outreach and presentations. Ryan also attended gatherings at local tenant associations, churches, senior citizen centers, and daycare centers, far exceeding the grant's outreach goal of attending 10 meetings.

The Future

The partnership of Ryan/Adair continued beyond the grant period and has remained self-sustaining through patient revenue and the collection of fees to cover operating costs. The Ryan Network continues to provide resources to develop, promote, and sustain Ryan/Adair, including governance; administrative, financial, and clinical guidance; leadership; and prevention, education, and outreach support.

As a result of the project, Ryan/Adair has also established and strengthened partnerships and collaborative efforts with more than 30 community-based organizations. These partnerships are essential to ensuring the future success and growth of the project. By the close of the grant, Ryan/Adair was particularly focused on increasing outreach for its dental department. Some planned initiatives included: continuing to refer patients to CUSD's ElderSmile program; referring seniors for medical and dental care via a case manager who liaises with Ryan/Adair staff members to facilitate appointments (supported by a small grant from the Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation); continuing use of an AmeriCorps outreach liaison to promote dental services; enhancing outreach, including Meet the Dentist workshops at community outreach events and health fairs; and producing a dental services-specific brochure. By November 2011, Ryan/Adair expected an increase in all patient visits as a result of these efforts. It still expects to function at maximum capacity and should generate approximately 11,200 medical encounters and 7,500 dental encounters by its third year of operation under Ryan.

Finally, Ryan hopes that this model of collaboration will be used by other community health centers and hospitals in the future.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

ABOUT THE GRANTEE

William F. Ryan Community Health Center (Ryan) is part of a family of nonprofit, federally qualified health centers, which delivers affordable medical care to diverse and underserved communities. Ryan provides an all-inclusive sliding fee scale for uninsured and underinsured patients based on family size and income. Ryan also maintains a pharmaceutical plan with a minimal copayment of \$10 for each prescription for self-pay and Medicare patients; uninsured homeless patients receive medications at no charge with Ryan absorbing the remaining expenses.

GRANTEE CONTACT

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