

## Grant Outcomes Report

### Yonkers Health Access Project

#### The Problem:

Yonkers, the largest city in Westchester County and the fourth largest city in New York State, is a medically isolated community, lacking an adequate primary care infrastructure and access to care for its most disenfranchised residents. The majority of Yonkers' low-income individuals lack health insurance or resources to pay for increasingly expensive health care. In addition, there is a dearth of physicians willing to accept uninsured or Medicaid patients, and even fewer who offer a sliding fee scale. Yonkers has been federally designated as a Medically Underserved Area.

Two hospitals—St. John's Riverside and St. Joseph's Medical Center—operated outpatient clinics that had served as the safety net for low-income residents, but by 2009, the worsening economic situation threatened the capacity of these two systems to sustain their services. Both hospitals faced the possibility of closing their clinics.

After reviewing options to sustain outpatient services, St. John's Riverside and Hudson River HealthCare (HRHCare) decided to transition St. John's two Valentine Lane Family Practice centers to HRHCare. HRHCare was established in 1975 to address the health needs of low-income residents in Yonkers and neighboring communities.

Both institutions believed that moving the Valentine Lane Family Practice centers into HRHCare's network of federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) offered the best means of stabilizing revenue and services in Yonkers. Hudson River HealthCare received Federal approval for the transition, and the two Valentine Lane Family Practice Centers became HRHCare sites on April 20, 2009.

#### KEY INFORMATION:

**GRANTEE**

Hudson River HealthCare, Inc.

**GRANT TITLE**

Yonkers Health Access Project

**DATES**

May 1, 2009–June 22, 2010

**GRANT AMOUNT**

\$250,000

**FUNDING**

2009 Special Projects

## Grant Activities and Outcomes:

With a May 2009 NYHealth grant, HRHCare set out to achieve the following goals:

- Transition Valentine Lane's 10,000 patients to HRHCare's network of FQHCs. The transition involved moving clinical, administrative, and financial systems.
- Expand services offered at the Valentine Lane Family Practice Centers by drawing down enhanced Medicaid reimbursement and other funds available to FQHCs.

HRHCare worked collaboratively with staff from St. John's Riverside to achieve these goals. The project allowed the two organizations to build on and enhance their longstanding partnership in providing services to residents of Yonkers.

By the end of the grant period, the project had achieved almost all of its goals:

- A total of 9,108 patients received services delivered by the new Valentine Lane Family Practice Centers operated by HRHCare.
- Clinical, billing, and administrative systems moved from St. John's Riverside to HRHCare.
- Communications activities, including an open house with a ribbon-cutting event and advertisements placed in bus shelters, prompted widespread interest in and support for the new arrangement. HRHCare and Primary Care Development Corporation staff collaborated on an article describing the process for transitioning diagnostic and treatment centers to FQHCs, including the New York State Certificate of Need (CON) approval process; financing existing debt; educating community partners; and developing viable business plans. At the date of this grant outcomes report, the article had not been published.



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HRHCare implemented a sliding fee scale for uninsured patients in April 2009. By October, more than 2,300 patient visits using the sliding fee scale had been completed, twice the number of sliding fee visits typically seen prior to the change.

HRHCare and St. John's Riverside continued to work on elements of the project that began, but were not completed, during the NYSHealth grant period. These elements—securing funding for wraparound services such as transportation, translation, and case management, and funding to expand dental services—relied on actions from the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH). Negotiations with the State were ongoing as of January 2012. NYSDOH approved funding for the project, but funds have not yet been made available. HRHCare continues to work with the Office of Primary Care at NYSDOH to address this deliverable.

## The Future:

HRHCare is looking forward to the launch of dental services when a new dental suite is completed at its S. Broadway site in Yonkers. A contractor has been selected, and the CON approved. As of May 2012, HRHCare's Yonkers dental project is still waiting for approval from the Comptroller and final contracts to be released so that construction can begin. HRHCare will continue to seek opportunities to expand services and programs that meet the growing needs of medically underserved and special populations in the greater Yonkers area.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

### ABOUT THE GRANTEE

For nearly 37 years, Hudson River HealthCare (HRHCare) has been providing innovative programs and comprehensive, culturally competent services to meet the needs of at-risk populations in the Hudson Valley. HRHCare began in 1975 in downtown Peekskill, one of the area's poorest cities. Since then, HRHCare has expanded to 21 primary care sites, now serving 80,000 people annually throughout a ten-county region (Westchester, Dutchess, Putnam, Columbia, Ulster, Orange, Rockland, Sullivan, Suffolk, and Nassau) of southeastern New York State. As a federally qualified health center, HRHCare provides care to all who seek it, regardless of insurance status or ability to pay. The 2011 winner of the prestigious HIMSS Davies Award of Excellence, HRHCare has been accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations since 1998, and is recognized by the National Committee on Quality Assurance as a Level 3 Patient-Centered Medical Home.

### GRANTEE CONTACT

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