



How is health reform helping Rhode Island's community health centers provide high-quality, low-cost primary health care to Rhode Islanders?

Health Reform Update

The *Affordable Care Act*, signed into law on March 23, 2010, and its companion reconciliation bill, signed into law on March 30, 2010, call for increased access to insurance for Americans, as well as increased access to primary care through the community health centers and others.

Health reform is helping Rhode Island's community health centers expand to meet the growing need for high-quality, low-cost primary care.

- **Health reform builds on a series of investments by the federal government.**
 - President George W. Bush's administration expanded the health centers program to 1,200 sites, and doubled health center funding. It was then the biggest increase in discretionary funding in the Federal Health Centers Program's history.
 - The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funded construction projects and additional capacity to meet the increased demand for health center services that came with the economic downturn and the increase in uninsured patients.
 - The Affordable Care Act (ACA) recognizes the success of the health center model of care, and the need for an expansion of the nation's primary care infrastructure. ACA anticipates that Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) will double in capacity in anticipation of 2014, when more Americans will have access to health insurance and seek primary health care.
- **Health Reform is helping Rhode Island's community health centers hire additional doctors, nurses and other health care providers in order to care for more patients.**
 - Rhode Island's community health centers are anticipating adding medical, dental and behavioral health providers to meet increasing demand for our high-quality integrated health care.
 - Other additional staff will help increase the quality of the medical homes at Rhode Island's community health centers. Additional hires facilitated by health reform will include nurse care managers, outreach educators, reception staff, and medical assistants.

Expanded insurance coverage will help 140,000 uninsured Rhode Islanders access primary medical, dental and behavioral health care.

Health reform provides expanded access to health insurance through new health insurance exchanges, with subsidies to help Rhode Islanders with moderate incomes afford insurance, and an expansion of the Medicaid program to help low-income Rhode Islanders. Many newly insured Rhode Islanders may choose to go to one of our high-quality, low-cost community health centers. Rhode Island's community health centers are expanding in anticipation of these additional patients.

- Health reform is funding construction of a new home for Newport's community health center. The East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP) community health center construction project is an integral part of the revitalization of this low-income neighborhood in Newport. Health reform will facilitate this project to quadruple the size of the community health center, double the number of exam rooms to 8, include the addition of behavioral health rooms, and house the WIC program. The community health center will be next door to the Head Start program, also run by EBCAP, and is near the community college.
- Health reform is funding improvements to Cranston Community Action Program's (CCAP) community health center in Cranston, ensuring that the facility serves patients well.
- Health centers throughout Rhode Island are expanding with funding outside of health reform in anticipation of increasing numbers of patients and expectations that health centers will double their capacity, as set forth in the Affordable Care Act. Blackstone Valley Community Health Care (BVCHC), Providence Community Health Centers (PCHC), and Thundermist Health Center are all planning large construction projects that will lead to substantially larger facilities in Pawtucket, Providence and West Warwick.

Expanded insurance coverage will help Rhode Island's community health centers provide even better health care to their 36,000 uninsured patients.

Community health centers are expert in providing excellent care to all patients, whether or not they have insurance. Still, it is often challenging to connect uninsured patients with specialty care, or to have patients fill all their prescriptions or get all the lab tests that are recommended.

The rate of uninsurance is increasing in Rhode Island, and our community health centers are seeing the effect of this trend. At one health center location, 43% of new patients in 2010 were uninsured.

CenterCare, a joint proposal of the Rhode Island Health Center Association and Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island, would serve many currently uninsured Rhode Islanders as a **"bridge" to health reform implementation**. CenterCare would provide a very basic, primary care only Medicaid expansion for single adults under 133% of the Federal Poverty Level now, before full Medicaid expansion in 2014.

The **Basic Health Plan** envisioned in Health Reform for adults and families under 200% of the Federal Poverty Level would provide **affordable care to low-income Rhode Islanders**, as already happens for a majority of them through Rhode Island's innovative and highly successful RIte Care program.