



The Central Falls Neighborhood Health Station

A Neighborhood Health Station is a new kind of community health organization that builds community as it improves the health of individuals. It provides a place for the people in a neighborhood to get most of the medical services they need, a coordinated team of health professionals to care for that community, a community organization that can advocate for the health of everyone who lives in the community, and a place for people to come together, exercise, and grow together. We started with one of Rhode Island's great community health centers, and added an expanded staff of health professionals, creating a broad multidisciplinary team that addresses the health care needs of individuals and creates opportunities for prevention and wellness. Medical and dental professionals, recovery coaches and substance use disorder treatment counselors, mental and behavioral health workers, social workers and psychologists, physical and occupational therapists, nurse care managers, home health nurses and aides, community health workers and health coaches, paramedics and emergency medical technicians, housing advocates, community organizers, recreation counselors and coaches, community service police, and lawyers specializing in health advocacy now work together to improve the health of our community, organizing in and with all the people who live in the community we serve.

During a community assessment conducted by the Rhode Island Department of Health in 2013, Central Falls residents voiced a need for a community center and health education programs to create opportunities for healthy living and address safety and drug use in the community. They also called for better collaboration to provide recreation opportunities for community members, as well as improved access to affordable health care.

To meet those needs, a community health center, Blackstone Valley Community Health Care, Inc. (BVCHC) collaborated with Memorial Hospital of Rhode Island, the City of Central Falls, and the Central Falls School District to create a school-based health center in Central Falls High School. Then BVCHC acquired the adjacent Notre Dame Ambulatory Center, so that urgent care could be integrated into primary care and behavioral health, and so that the needs of both people who use traditionally primary care and those who chose urgent care are met. Then the City of Central Falls created the Central Falls Office on Health, which brought BVCHC into a partnership and a close collaboration with Central Falls Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and now everyone who uses an ambulance is contacted within seventy-two hours of their transport to make sure they are recovering, and also to make sure they have access to world class primary care. Together, our community health workers reach out to young women

in the high school who may need family planning services, enroll them in the school based clinic, and coach them to continue using the contraception they have been prescribed. We just launched a whole community smoking cessation program called FRESHSTART that uses texting and other new technologies to reduce smoking prevalence, hopefully by thirty percent, and together we created the Central Falls Substance Use Disorder Prevention and Treatment Task Force, which aims to reduce opiate overdose by 50 percent in one year. As a result of our collaboration, the YMCA of Pawtucket and Central Falls now runs buses to their facilities in neighboring cities so Central Falls residents have a place to go for exercise; the City Parks and Recreation Department organized monthly outside salsa dancing all summer which attracts a thousand people each month and organizes whole city walks with the Mayor and the City's Chief Health Strategist.

Our community health workers are reaching out to all businesses, religious organizations, and community organizations in the city, so that everyone who lives in the city understands what health care services are available at the new Neighborhood Health Station and how to use those services. Between those three care sites and our work with EMS, we are touching the lives of 70 percent of the population of Central Falls. We aim to touch the lives of 90 percent of Central Falls residents by the end of three years.

In our first full year of operation, we reduced adolescent pregnancy in Central Falls by 24 percent, and reduced EMS use by 15 percent. And that's just the beginning...