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PITTSBURGH MERCY
A HERITAGE OF HOPE

DONOR CONNECTION

Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Wahrenberger, addresses a patient's recent leg injury.

PMFHC's Unique Program Addresses Health Disparities

Pittsburgh Mercy Family Health Center (PMFHC) is a person-centered medical facility that integrates physical and behavioral health care to meet the complex needs of those with mental illness, developmental disabilities, or substance use disorders. Opened in 2012, it was the first program of its kind in the Pittsburgh region, integrating a primary family medical practice (for both adults and children) into an established behavioral services organization.

Last year, PMFHC was designated a Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH) by the National Commission of Quality Assurance, an accreditation awarded to facilities that emphasize team-based care, communication, and coordination by strengthening relationships between patients and their clinical care teams.

Challenges & Barriers
Our country's health inequities – at the individual, institutional, and structural levels – are a key challenge in providing this type of care. For those in vulnerable populations, factors like poverty, discrimination, housing instability, and stigma can significantly limit their access to care.

Many individual barriers also can cause at-risk individuals to avoid or delay seeking care – including undiagnosed/untreated chronic medical conditions, difficulty with medication compliance, limited transportation access, social anxiety, communication barriers, and fear and mistrust of doctors and medical systems. The result is often more negative health outcomes.

Integrated, Comprehensive Care

Understanding that physical health is directly impacted by behavioral health is key to our approach. Research shows that compared to national norms, alcohol and opioid use disorders reduce life expectancy by 9-17 years, and mental illness reduces life expectancy by at least 10 years.

Our PMFHC Care Hubs model goes beyond a traditional primary care setting. The Hubs can immediately respond to a patient's need for additional services like food, housing, benefits coordination, substance use treatment, pharmacy access, shelter support, and psychiatry. Each of the Hubs are staffed with 1-2 doctors, physician assistants, or nurse practitioners; 1-2 medical assistants; and 1 care manager with a specific specialization (mental health, chronic disease, homeless services, and substance use disorders).

As part of our integrated, team-based approach, PMFHC also serves as an entry point for many of Pittsburgh Mercy's behavioral health programs, such as Street Medicine and homeless services, CTT/ACT teams, shelter service, substance use treatment programs, rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing, and our crisis recovery center. These 'warm hand-offs' are often key to meeting needs before a situation escalates and potentially leads to arrest, suicidal ideation, or hospitalization.

"We are privileged to serve a population of people with unique needs and challenges. Our care begins with health and wellness screenings that identify behavioral health needs, substance and tobacco use, and housing and food insecurity. We are able to address medical needs as well as several social determents of health during a routine medical visit," explains Sarah Kidwell, Senior Manager of Health Center Services.

Last year, the PMFHC provided care to 2,547 individuals.

You are invited to Meet The Team!

Don't miss this opportunity to learn about Pittsburgh Mercy's Operation Safety Net and the comprehensive services that support those who are experiencing homelessness. Pittsburgh Mercy's CEO, Tony Beltran and Dr. Jim Withers will be discussing these programs. Board Members and colleagues will be on hand to discuss how your support is making a difference in the lives of those here in Pittsburgh. The event will be held at the Law Offices of Dentons Cohen and Grigsby, EQT Plaza in downtown Pittsburgh

RSVP is required by May 8. Please email development@pittsburghmercy.org or register via this QR Code:

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