

Novartis US Foundation supports telehealth programs to provide access to care for New Jersey's most vulnerable communities

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- Partnership with NJPCA, which represents 23 community health centers in NJ, funded 5 telehealth pilots; programs serving as role models for centers across state
- The Grant enabled NJ community health centers to quickly implement telehealth to maintain continuity of care for underserved communities, especially critical during the current COVID-19 pandemic
- Novartis US Foundation supports programs to reimagine healthcare through use of digital tools to reduce barriers to care

EAST HANOVER, N.J., April 30, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- The Novartis US Foundation announced that a grant provided to the New Jersey Primary Care Association (NJPCA) made it possible to launch five new telehealth programs for community health centers in the state. These telehealth programs provide virtual primary and specialty care, including mental health services, to New Jersey's most vulnerable citizens, the underserved and the uninsured, and has enabled the centers to continue providing these services during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Telehealth Innovation Pilot Grant Program was awarded in February to NJPCA, which represents 23 community health centers and 133 satellite healthcare facilities throughout New Jersey. Five community health centers awarded grants to implement pilot telehealth programs are now serving as guides for health centers across the state.

"Telemedicine is critical for Community Health Centers in New Jersey to meet the primary and specialty care needs of the over half a million patients we serve. The importance of telehealth programs has been underscored by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite a dramatic drop in patient volume due to COVID-19, our pilot centers are utilizing telehealth for 70-90% of their visits, in many instances," said Selina Haq, PhD, Interim Executive Director of the New Jersey Primary Care Association. "The grant from the Novartis US Foundation made it possible to get telehealth programs off the ground quickly since the five participating health centers already had robust plans in place and the necessary resources to implement them."

The partnership with NJPCA is part of the Novartis US Foundation's commitment to efforts focused on advancing health equity and increasing access to care. The US Foundation will commit approximately \$2 million over two years to NJPCA to pilot a new model of digital care. This telehealth initiative aims to address the gaps in the delivery of care by offering access to providers and specialists remotely. Five community health centers – CAMcare Health Corporation, Henry J. Austin Health Center, Metropolitan Family Health Network, Monmouth Family Health Center, and Zufall Health Center – were awarded the grants to participate in the pilot program. Given the rapid response needed in the midst of the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic, leadership from these five centers are providing guidance to others across New Jersey on how to implement telehealth efforts and maintain continuity of care. By supporting this innovative program, the Novartis US Foundation aims to connect more patients to providers, so they can receive much-needed care services.

"We selected NJPCA as a partner because the organization is well positioned to drive digital solutions that help to address disparities of care among some of our most underserved communities," said Tom Kendris, US

Country President, Novartis and Chairman of the Board of Trustees. "While we could not have predicted the COVID-19 pandemic when we originally forged this collaboration with NJPCA, it is indeed fortunate that we were able to enable them to be ready for the urgent needs of the patients they serve. We will continue to bring our mission to life by identifying opportunities to improve health equity in the community where we work and live as well as in communities across the country."

NJPCA represents 23 community health centers, also known as federally qualified health centers, and 133 satellite care sites providing healthcare services to underserved communities in New Jersey. The organization is an advocate for these facilities and provides comprehensive education, training and technical assistance. New Jersey's FQHCs provided affordable care to more than 580,000 people in 2019, saving the state approximately \$355.8million¹.

"The telehealth programs already demonstrating success in New Jersey community health centers provide a template for federally qualified health centers across the nation. These programs have the potential to change how community health centers provide care in the future by allowing for new ways to collect data that will help coordinate and streamline care. In addition to piloting telehealth programs, we are also working with our state and federal partners to ensure all patients have access to virtual/telehealth services," Selina Haq added.

About Novartis US Foundation

The Novartis US Foundation strives to improve health in underserved communities in the US by creating innovative and sustainable solutions to expand access to healthcare and build trust within the healthcare system. Through the Novartis US Foundation, Novartis supports programs at national and local nonprofit organizations aimed at enhancing access to healthcare, addressing implicit bias and increasing diversity in the healthcare workforce, as well as efforts to address social determinants of health in local communities.

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References

1. NJPCA. Quick Facts 2020.

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