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COMMUNITY HEALTH AND DENTAL CARE



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Behavioral Health Team

Providing Affordable Physical, Behavioral, and Dental Care in the Tri-County Area

By Kathy Hunt

Everyone knows how lousy it feels to come down with a cold, toothache, sprain, or other ailment, and how fantastic it feels to be well again. Good health is our most precious resource, but often, it takes a back seat to more immediate concerns, such as work, housing, and finances. A July 2025 report from the nonpartisan organization KFF noted that, due to cost, 36 percent of all Americans and 75 percent of uninsured American adults postponed or went without needed healthcare in the past 12 months. Thanks to the nonprofit Community Health and Dental Care (CHDC), residents of Berks, Chester, and Montgomery Counties don't have to make such a hard choice.

Headquartered in Pottstown at 351 West Schuylkill Road, behind Boscov's at the Shoppes at Coventry (formerly Coventry Mall), the nonprofit CHDC offers

affordable healthcare for all ages. With accessibility in mind, it has three offices in Pottstown, one in Barto, and one in Boyertown. It also operates a mobile dental unit at Montgomery County Community College's Pottstown campus as well as a large mobile medical unit. Its recently-acquired sprinter van will be used to provide physicals, among other services, at such sites as local recovery houses, and free screenings throughout its service area. Most of its medical appointments, though, take place at one of the five offices.

In 2024, CHDC registered over 59,200 patient visits. In terms of new patients, from July 2024 to August 2025, it averaged 400 new patients per month. This was an increase from its 2023 new patient average of 300 per month. Several factors contributed to this growth including social media marketing, insurance company referrals, and patient word-of-mouth.

Wide range of healthcare options through CHDC

The healthcare organization opened its doors to the public in October 2008. Originally funded through the Pottstown Regional Community Foundation, formerly the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation and local businesses, in 2012, it was designated a federally-qualified health center (FQHC). The title enables CHDC to apply for federal grants from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Federally-qualified health centers serve children and adults in low-income communities, and do not turn away those who cannot pay for care.

As its name suggests, Community Health and Dental Care provides general medicine and dentistry for adults and children. The center's main site at the Shoppes at Coventry also has vision, podiatry, physical therapy, behavioral health, phlebotomy, and dispensary services. Additionally, it offers medication-assisted treatment (MAT) to those struggling with opioid use disorders or alcohol dependency.



The CHDC's mobile dental unit, currently at Montgomery County Community College's Pottstown campus, brings high-quality dental care to convenient locations.

At CHDC, case managers are on site to assist patients with insurance, paperwork, and referrals. The nonprofit accepts most major insurances, including Medicaid, Medicare, and commercial insurers. Patients without insurance pay a sliding fee that is based on family size and household income. The finance department will work with them to set up this reduced healthcare cost. Those eligible can receive discounts of 25, 40, 55, 70, or 100 percent for services received at CHDC.

Two additional Pottstown offices at 700 and 802 Heritage Drive focus on dental care and OB/GYN. In the coming year, the OB/GYN office will potentially add doulas and/or certified nurse midwives, trained professionals who give information, emotional support, and physical comfort to a mother before, during, and immediately after childbirth.

"I want to give people more resources," said Bridgette McGivern, CEO of CHDC. "And with the statistics around premature births and the challenges people face every day, having a doula and/or certified nurse midwife by a woman's side would be a great support."

McGivern, who has been with CHDC for 15 years, writes all the grants for the organization. At the time of publication, she had applied for a state grant to fund this new women's health service.

CHDC's Barto location, at 1315 Route 100 North, provides pediatric and adult medical care, dental, physical therapy, behavioral health, and phlebotomy. Its newest office, at 6 E. Philadelphia Avenue in Boyertown, has pediatric and adult medical care and women's health/OB-GYN services. Between its offices and mobile units, Community Health and Dental Care have 35 quality providers working to keep residents of the tri-county area healthy.

Integrated programs to address all clients' needs

Patients of CHDC can anticipate obtaining an integrated team of professionals who work to ensure that all their healthcare needs are met. The team consists not only of medical, dental, and behavioral health providers but also the aforementioned case managers. Along with determining and explaining benefits eligibility and assisting with paperwork, case managers may connect clients with organizations that assist with rent payment, heating, food insecurities, and other concerns.

(Continued on page 8)

CHDC has offices in five convenient locations throughout...



Pottstown



Boyertown



Barto

(Continued from page 7)

Integration also plays a role in providing timely and convenient healthcare. “If a patient comes for a medical appointment, we try to make sure they have their dental and vision appointments on the same day, too,” McGivern said. “We try to be considerate of people’s time. They’re here, so let’s try to get everything done the same day.”

The center further assists its clients by running a free shuttle service to, from, and between its health centers. Seeing a physician at the Boyertown office and then heading to a physical therapy appointment in Pottstown? No problem! Patients who are 18 years or older can sign up for transportation at the same time that they make their appointment(s). With the exception of those with young children, a patient may bring one companion on the shuttle.

In addition to on-site, telehealth, and transport services, CHDC has partnered with Tower Health Hospital in Pottstown to support the community’s growing unhoused population. CHDC’s board certified psychiatric nurse devotes a portion of her time to its street medicine program, building trust with unhoused patients, and referring them back to the health center if they require additional care. To ensure that no one’s needs are overlooked, the street medicine team will go into the woods, on foot, to meet with and assist patients, McGivern said.

“Our community health workers really help to build that trust. In the last few months, we’ve sent one of our certified recovery specialists with the street medicine team,” Neiman said. “Some of the population may have substance use disorders, and our recovery specialist can help build trust so that, once a person feels ready, they can come back to the health center and begin treatment.”

She added that one of the organization’s certified recovery specialists, Deliverance, recently became a certified allied addiction practitioner, while another certified recovery specialist, Darryl, is working towards his bachelor’s degree in psychology. “At CHDC, we’re proud to support our staff in growing both personally and professionally,” Neiman said.



Street Medicine Team



Mobile Sprinter Van

Grant allows for expanded behavior health services

Whether someone feels overwhelmed by life, is grieving a loss, or is fighting depression, anxiety, addiction, or other issues, CHDC will assist in finding the path to a brighter future and better quality of life. At the initial intake appointment with a behavioral health consultant, the person’s therapeutic needs are assessed. If considered appropriate, the patient is then referred to one of the CHDC Well-Being Navigators who provide short-brief behavioral health support. Along with in-person counseling to help manage stress and day-to-day challenges, CHDC offers telehealth sessions that take place in the comfort and privacy of one’s home.

In 2025, CHDC received a federal grant to expand its behavioral health offerings. The organization had competed against approximately 1,900 other FQHCs across the country for this funding.

“It was a big win for the CHDC to receive the grant, because psychiatric care will be included in the base grant that we receive every year, so we’ll continue to receive funding to provide those services,” McGivern said.

In applying for this grant, McGivern’s specific goal was to add psychiatric services to CHDC’s behavioral health program. On December 1, this will become a reality when the center welcomes its own psychiatrist. The addition is particularly noteworthy and impactful because, in the United States, there is an increasing shortage of medical doctors who diagnosis and treat mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders. According to the National Center for Health Workforce Analysis, due to an increasing demand for mental health and substance abuse disorder treatment, the country will be short 50,440 psychiatrists by 2037.

In order to obtain psychiatric services, an individual must be a CHDC medical patient and receive a behavioral health referral through a CHDC well-being navigator. CHDC chief clinical officer Candace Neiman noted that CHDC’s well-being navigators are either



CHDC's chief clinical officer Candace Neiman

licensed clinical social workers (LCSW) or licensed professional counselors (LPC) who possess advanced trauma training and other specialties. For instance, Laura Galindez, LCSW, specializes in acceptance and commitment therapy, mindfulness, and EMDR (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing). She has a background in oncology and can attend to patients diagnosed with cancer. Andre Hewitt, LPC, is trained in dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT) and psychodynamic therapy and is also a licensed behavioral specialist. While his primary focus is adolescents and young adults, his clients range from ages 5 to 18. Once patients turn 18, they transition to adult services.

COE MAT Team



Center of Excellence devoted to opioid use disorder

Among its behavioral health services, CHDC operates one of Pennsylvania's 45 Centers of Excellence (COE) for Opioid Use Disorder (OUD). Opioid use disorder is a chronic mental health condition that can lead to serious or life-threatening physical and psychological problems. Centers of Excellence, as the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's website indicates, "take care of the whole person, including OUD treatment, physical health treatment, such as diabetes management, and mental health treatment It also means that COEs provides hand-in-hand support to every person with OUD, including providing every person with OUD a peer who helps the person process all steps in the recovery process and providing every person with a community-based care management team who helps the person identify, organize, obtain, and sustain treatment/non-treatment resources."

CHDC's designated Center of Excellence fulfills the state's criteria through a care management team that coordinates the patient's treatment plan and connects the person with both internal and external resources, such as support groups, 12-step meetings, and employment, education, and sober-living resources. Patients enrolled in the COE work with health and psychiatry services and certified recovery specialists who understand firsthand the recovery process and utilize their personal experiences to provide guidance to the patient.

"The COE team and integrated well-being navigators work hand-in-hand to ensure patients receive whole-person care. They collaborate through warm handoffs," Neiman said.

As an example, Neiman cited a COE patient who is exhibiting signs of depression or anxiety and how the behavioral health team can step in and provide intervention therapy or refer to the patient to the CHDC psychiatrist for medication management.

"If long-term therapy is needed, they help with resources to connect them with a therapist," she said. "Likewise, if a well-being navigator identifies someone struggling with substance use, they can refer them directly to COE for support and medication-assisted treatment, when ready. This collaboration allows us to reduce gaps in care, provide consistent follow-up, and support patients in both their recovery and overall wellness."

As Neiman mentioned, through the COE, CHDC patients can access medication-assisted treatment (MAT). This program combines FDA-approved medications, such as buprenorphine and naltrexone, with counseling and medical and behavioral support. Each MAT patient has an individualized, integrated care team that includes a board-certified recovery specialist and licensed medical professionals.

Patients are monitored for illicit drug use and, if necessary, receive treatment for hepatitis C.

A proven, evidence-based approach, MAT helps to normalize brain activity and reduce physical cravings and the risk of relapse. It is a whole-person approach that addresses not only physical but also the emotional and mental struggles surrounding addiction.

As with its other health services, CHDC provides free transportation throughout Montgomery, Chester, and Berks counties to all its locations. It also has a discounted fee program for patients without insurance. To learn more about CHDC's medication-assisted treatment and the Center of Excellence, call 610.851.4805, extension 105.

"An integrated visit allows the patient to have more than one provider service encounter in one day, saving you time and maximizes your health."

Useful information for uncertain times

Presently, there is a tremendous amount of uncertainty regarding federal changes to Medicaid, Medicare, and the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP). CHDC will continue to serve and support its clients as it stays up-to-date with policy alterations and makes strategic plans for increased fundraising and donations in 2026.

"We're following what changes will impact our organization and federal grant money. For our clients, I try to educate people so that they know what work requirements are coming and what they need to do not to lose their coverage," McGivern said. "We give our patients resources, including what's around in the community if they need support for food, and help them understand what their insurance card covers. A lot may not realize that they have Medicaid. We give them a cheat sheet that shows what their card covers, when to enroll, and other things that they can either read over themselves or go over with their case manager."

She added that patients and others in need can access other sources of support in the area, such as Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities. The nonprofit focuses on food security, housing stability, and supportive services. People throughout the tri-state region can dial 211, text their zip code to 898-211, or start an online chat at pa211.org. PA 211 connects Pennsylvanians to a free resource specialist who can share information about housing, food, or utilities-payment assistance, after-school programs, legal advice, and more. "We try to connect people with resources, but, at the end of the day, we remain a medical, dental, and behavioral health services provider," she said.

Those desiring CHDC services or free mobile screenings can visit its website, <https://ch-dc.org>, call 610.326.9460, or stop by the main healthcare center at 351 West Schuylkill Road, in the Shoppes at Coventry, in Pottstown. Anyone interested in making a financial donation can do so by mail at Community Health & Dental Care Attention: Finance Department 351 W. Schuylkill Road, Suite G-15A, Pottstown, PA 19465.