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CHDC

**Community Health and Dental Care
Adds Boyertown Location, Expands
Service Offerings to Address the Growing
Need for Affordable Quality Health Care**

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Community Health and Dental Care

CHDC Adds Boyertown Location, Expands Service Offerings to Address the Growing Need for Affordable Quality Health Care

Community Health and Dental Care (CHDC), a nonprofit health center, has been providing affordable, quality, and preventive health care that is accessible to residents of Montgomery, Berks and Chester counties since 2008. Its initial funding came from the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation and local businesses. Community Health and Dental Care is classified as a federally qualified health center. It serves people of all ages in low-income communities and does not turn away patients who cannot pay. As a federally qualified health center, CHDC also receives grant money from the Health and Services Resource Administration (HRSA) to help subsidize its services.

Honoring its mission statement "... to identify gaps in health services and to ensure access to appropriate levels of care for all people in the service area regardless of their ability to pay," CHDC accepts patients with and without insurance and gives discounts based on income and family size. Presently, it has over 25,000 active patients.

Headquartered in North Coventry Township at 351 West Schuylkill Road, behind Dick's Sporting Goods at The Shoppes at Coventry, CHDC offers primary care, pediatrics, podiatry, vision, dental, physical therapy, behavioral health and medication-assisted treatment, phlebotomy, and dispensary services at this location.

NEW BOYERTOWN OFFICE



PHOTOS BY STEVE LADNER PHOTOGRAPHY



CHDC Boyertown Medical

Two additional Pottstown offices — 700 and 802 Heritage Drive — focus on dental care and OB/GYN and CHDC partners with the supplemental nutrition program for women and children (WIC program), which is located on the lower level of 700 Heritage Drive. In 2020, CHDC launched a fourth location on Route 100 in Barto offering medical, dental, and physical therapy, and most recently opened a 2,000 square-foot medical and behavioral health office at 6 E. Philadelphia Avenue in Boyertown.

CHDC also offers virtual visits. “You don’t even have to leave your home,” said Bridgette McGivern, the center’s Chief Executive Officer. “If it’s an appropriate visit you can click on your phone or your computer and we do virtual visits which is great, especially with it getting dark earlier. People don’t want to go out, so that’s another great way to get access to care,” she said.

“Over the last 14 years that I’ve been here, we’ve been steadily expanding, and we are currently growing at an average of 425 new patients per month,” McGivern said. To accommodate this impressive growth — up from an

average of 300 new patients per month a year ago — CHDC opened its newest location in Boyertown in July of this year. “We’ve always pulled patients from Boyertown, with patients going to our Barto or The Shoppes at Coventry and Heritage Drive locations, and that’s been an area where we’ve seen a lot of growth, as far as the needs in that community,” McGivern said.

In 2023 CHDC partnered with an outside vendor to do a community needs assessment which revealed there are approximately 2,500 low-income people in the Boyertown area that still did not have access to CHDC’s services or any other viable options. “We also found out from that community needs assessment that there were actually more people who definitely could benefit from becoming a patient of the health center,” McGivern said. “After reviewing the data and looking at the census tracking, we felt that having a site right on the main street in Boyertown would make access easier for people who might be having transportation barriers. As we’re seeing right now, a lot of people are walking to the new location. It’s not a huge office, but when I saw the opportunity, I felt it was a good one to jump on, because it would be easier for people to access our services, and we already have partners right there.”

CHDC has partnered with The Medicine Shoppe Pharmacy next door to the new location. “They’ve been a great community partner for almost 30 years in the Boyertown area,” McGivern said, “We have had projects with them where we’re integrating a clinical pharmacist, especially for the Medicare population, to be an addition to the care team, because it can be confusing, how many medications you’re taking, making sure you’re doing a Medication reconciliation with your care team, and determining the need for any other support and advice,” she said.

Because the Boyertown location is only 2,000 square feet right now, CHDC is offering women’s health, pediatrics, and family practice at that location, with plans to add increased behavioral health services. “It’s not a big office,” McGivern said. “We would love to engage with increased access to dental, but dental needs space, so we refer



Free shuttle service.



**Krista Dankiw-Ludwig, MSN, CRNP, WHNP-BC and
LoriAnn Moser, Registered Nurse – CHDC Boyertown.**

patients to our Barto location or The Shoppes at Coventry. We offer free transportation, and that includes the Boyertown site. So, if someone comes in for a medical visit and they hadn’t had a dental exam, and they don’t have transportation, our shuttle will take them to one of our other locations that offers some of our other service lines,” she said.

To assist as many people as possible, CHDC runs a free shuttle service to and from its health centers from many convenient stops throughout the tri-county region. Patients who are 18 years or older can sign up for transportation at the same time that they make an appointment.

In addition to a shuttle service, CHDC operates a mobile medical unit and a mobile dental unit in the tri-county area which functions as a health care home on wheels, eliminating the transportation barrier and bringing health care to community locations. At any of the five office locations, patients can schedule same-day appointments. For the sake of time and convenience, they can arrange multiple appointments on the same day. Weekend and evening visits are also available.

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Bridgette McGivern, CEO

(Continued from page 7)

McGivern said that CHDC is also looking for the opportunity to partner with local businesses in the Boyertown area for employee health visits, if there is gap in insurance coverage. "There are a lot of great community-based businesses in the Boyertown area," she said. "It's just a wonderful area. We could partner with small businesses if they might offer health insurance for their employees but don't offer dental, or vision, or other kinds of services we have, such as physical therapy or MAT (medication assisted treatment), and I think that partnering with these businesses is a great opportunity. We can do an agreement and see their staff come to one of our health center sites to receive services at a fixed cost. That way, they're also giving access to their employees, and we all want healthy and happy employees, and having the right health care accessibility is important to have and be available. What we provide can help complement what they offer to their employees," she explains.

CHDC is fully committed to providing high quality, timely, and preventive care, and staffs its sites accordingly. Depending on their medical needs, patients can choose from seven Family Medicine Providers (consisting of two family physicians, four nurse practitioners, and one physician assistant); four Pediatric Providers (consisting of one pediatrician and three nurse practitioners); three Podiatrists; three Women's Health OB/GYN Providers (one Doctor of OB/GYN and two Women's Healthcare Nurse Practitioners); one MAT (medication-assisted treatment) provider.

CHDC also has six Dentists; eleven Dental Hygienists; four Physical Therapy providers (consisting of three Physical Therapists and one Physical Therapy Assistant); two Optometrists; and three Behavioral Health Providers.

Additionally, CHDC offers medication assistance treatment services that are integrated with behavioral health. Because CHDC does not run an in-patient



Photos on pages 8 and 9 were taken at the Shoppes at Coventry location.

treatment program, it refers patients to other reputable providers. However, once someone has left an in-patient facility, CHDC provides the person with its Center of Excellence (COE) case management support. As with any CHDC patient, the goal is to keep the person healthy and safe and prevent future issues.

Patients often come to the center through the recommendations of family, friends, and other trusted sources. The center also receives patient referrals through insurance. "There is interest with school districts, public housing units, and community organizations to collaborate and set up a small area so that we can be on these sites. My goal is to go where the people are, where there is a need," McGivern said.

Center of Excellence

In 2016, then Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf and the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services selected CHDC as one of 45 state Centers of Excellence for Opioid Use Disorder. At the time, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) had ranked Pennsylvania third for highest drug overdose deaths in the country. By 2021, the state had dropped to tenth. "Opioid disorders are not going away," McGivern points out. "We have this great designation and that carries into the Boyertown and any location. We have staff that help people navigate through what their first step is. We'll help them refer out. It's a growing problem, so, I just want people to know we have that great resource."





The Centers of Excellence designation has enabled CHDC to hire COE case managers who focus specifically on those struggling with opioid disorders. Among other things, case managers help arrange patient care, monitor and evaluate the patient's progress, and assist with insurance and/or receiving low-cost prescriptions and services. Care management teams aren't restricted to those with opioid and other substance abuse disorders. "If people are suffering and they don't have heat, they can't pay their rent, or they don't have food, the last thing on the minds is their health. They need to figure out those basic necessities first. That is where case management comes in," McGivern said.

All CHDC patients have a team to help them navigate the increasingly complex health care system. A CHDC care management team includes nurses, a behavioral health provider who is often a licensed practical counselor, a primary care provider, and a dentist. The team also has pharmacy assistance to help patients with medication management. The center is in the process of hiring a nutritionist but, in the interim, a care team nurse addresses patient nutrition, focusing specifically on the diabetic population but also aiding with food assistance.

In terms of food assistance, CHDC has partnered with the Chester County Food Bank and its Fresh2You mobile market. From June to November, the Fresh2You food truck travels throughout Chester County, supplying high-quality, local, seasonal, and affordable fresh fruits and vegetables to communities with limited access to wholesome foods. Customers can use SNAP, Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) checks, and all other forms of payment. Those who use SNAP or FMNP to shop at Fresh2You will earn vouchers that can be applied to future purchases. Additionally, anyone possessing a "food prescription" from CHDC can redeem it for fresh produce at the mobile market.

CHDC recently received a grant from Health Resource Service Administration (HRSA) to increase behavioral health services for all their patients at all locations. "There are about 1,900 health centers in the United States and 400 received the award, and we were one of them," McGivern said. "We're going to receive \$1.1 million over

two years to increase hiring behavioral health staffing to help manage the referrals, because it's hard for people to find a place that's not booked out, and we will be able to integrate that visit right then and there, either virtually or in person. We will be adding a tele-site psychiatrist," she said. "That will help with more complicated cases, especially to assist our providers with medication management and coordinating care plans together. One of our providers is going to be a psychiatric nurse practitioner, which, if a provider refers that you have depression and people have a high need, that position can help people get the treatment right then and there."

McGivern said CHDC will be able to do some more group classes for patients with the grant funding. "It could be amongst a thousand areas where people are struggling," she said. "Maybe it's a support group for parents of children with ADHD. We're trying to get more needed, real-life assistance for people, so they don't have to bounce around Montgomery, Chester and Berks counties. We're super excited to receive this award because it's not easy to compete against the whole country and make the case that we have the biggest needs here in the Pottstown surrounding area," she explains. "We need the funding and we obviously told the story well and that will give us more resources."

Caring for both insured and uninsured patients

Community Health and Dental Care accepts over 400 insurances, including Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program), and TRICARE, which covers active and retired military service members and their families. An onsite case manager can assist Medicare and Medicaid-eligible patients with registering for these insurance programs. For this year's Medicare open enrollment, which runs from October 15 through December 7, CHDC patients can consult case managers for help with selecting a plan and understanding the Medicare buy-in program, which helps pay for certain out-of-pocket health care costs.



Patients who do not qualify for either Medicare or Medicaid can apply for a sliding fee discount based on the current federal poverty level — the amount changes every year. For someone who is 100 percent slide and has met the household income and family size, they can come into the health center, apply for the sliding fee discount, and pay a nominal fee of \$25 for a medical visit and \$40 for dental. CHDC's medication dispensary enables patients to get prescriptions for as low as \$7 if they're eligible for the 100 percent sliding fee discount.

Among the dental services offered are routine check-ups, teeth cleaning, cavity fillings and root canals, tooth extractions, crowns, dentures, and night guards. The center encourages its patients to take care of their teeth and stay up-to-date with check-ups. Good dental health translates into good physical health and fewer illnesses and emergency room visits.

"For patients, the first step is to come in and get a medical exam," McGivern said. "If children, adults, and seniors kept up on their medical and dental care and went once a year to get a wellness check and six-month dental hygiene checks, it could change their lives. Screenings are there to be preventive. Don't wait until something really bad happens and you end up in the ER, getting a huge bill and costing the healthcare system so much more money. That's why we have these preventive measures, programs, and screenings, to keep people healthy."

Addressing the growing need for good health care

Every three years, nonprofit hospitals and certain nonprofit medical centers, including CHDC, must perform a community health needs assessment. The assessment ensures that a nonprofit organization helps its intended population, furthers its charitable mission, and does not profit from its work. It also identifies growing needs and changing demographics within a community.

CHDC is currently looking at possibly expanding their footprint at The Shoppes at Coventry. "We're in conversation with the owners of The Shoppes at Coventry to look at taking over a portion of the adjacent space recently vacated by Dick's Sporting Goods," McGivern said. "Over the next couple months, we'll determine if it's a good fit. We'll keep our existing space in The Shoppes at Coventry but we'll look at expanding space for dental and more behavioral health and add community rooms and some more offices. In our region, the need is ever-growing, and we strive to understand what the needs are in our community," she said.

For further information about Community Health and Dental Care or to schedule an appointment or donate to the center, email info@ch-dc.org, visit the CHDC website at www.ch-dc.org or call 610.326.9460.