

Background

Whole Person Care (WPC) is a pilot program within Medi-Cal 2020, California's Section 1115 Medicaid Waiver. WPC is designed to improve the health of high-risk, high-utilizing patients through the coordinated delivery of physical health, behavioral health, housing support, food stability, and other critical community services.

Who does the program serve?

Ventura County's WPC pilot targets the needs of high-utilizing beneficiaries of Gold Coast Health Plan, the county-organized Medi-Cal managed care health plan. These patients are defined as having four or more emergency department visits and/or two or more inpatient admissions in a year. Nearly all of these patients have multiple chronic conditions. Approximately 40% have mental health disorders and 25% are either homeless or have a substance use disorder.

What health care and social service organizations are participating?

Eighteen partner organizations are participating in Ventura County's WPC pilot project including:

Area Housing Authority of the County of Ventura: This county housing authority aims to be a leader in providing assistance to people in need of affordable housing through development, acquisitions, and partnerships

FOODShare, Inc: A community organization that distributes millions of pounds of healthy food every year

Gold Coast Health Plan: Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan

Interface Children & Family Services: A local non-profit social services agency that provides comprehensive, direct, and responsive wrap-around services to address complex needs for clients

Jewish Family Services: A faith-based charity with a mission to encourage and support the quality and continuity of individual, family, and community life

National Health Foundation: A community organization aimed to improve the health of individuals and underserved communities by taking action on the social determinants of health

Not One More: A non-profit community organization dedicated to providing support to community members and

Lead Entity: Ventura County Health Care Agency

Estimated Total Population: 2,280 individuals over the pilot period

Budget: \$10.8 million in federal funds, matched by an equal amount of local funding provided by Ventura County Health Care Agency

their families who are struggling with addiction

Project Understanding: A community organization focused on ensuring that homeless and at-risk families are housed and fed

Ventura County Continuum of Care Alliance: County coalition of homeless service providers committed to ending homelessness

Ventura County Health Care Agency (VCHCA): County public health care system, which includes key partners Ventura County Behavioral Health Department (VCBH), Ventura County Public Health Department (VCPHD), and Ventura County Medical Center (VCMC) and Ventura County Ambulatory Care, network of primary and specialty clinics

Ventura County Human Services Agency: Public service provider assisting with food, housing, health care, and employment

Ventura County Probation Agency: Law enforcement agency supervising individuals on probation

Ventura County Rescue Mission Alliance: A faith-based non-profit charity that offers refuge, recovery, and restoration services

Ventura County Salvation Army: A faith-based charity with a focus on feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, and changing the lives of individuals and families

Ventura County Sheriff's Office: Provides traditional police services and maintains county jail system

Ventura County St. Vincent de Paul: A faith-based charity that offers tangible assistance to those in need on a person-to-person basis

Ventura County Transportation Commission: Regional transportation planning agency

Workforce Investment Board: This county board aims to have a high-quality, appropriately skilled workforce that is ready and able to support the changing business needs of employers in a dynamic, competitive, global economic environment

What services are included?

WPC participants receive individualized integrated care plans, managed by trained community health workers who speak the same languages and come from similar backgrounds as program participants. They aim to provide patients with sensitive and appropriate care. These community health workers are part of a care coordination team, which includes care managers, nurses, and behavioral health specialists. All team members receive training to support their ability to meet the needs of this specialized population including team-based care, trauma informed care, motivational interviewing, mental health first aid, and crisis prevention training. A daily huddle supports the delivery of team-based care and a culture of patient safety.

Participants receive trauma-informed, patient-centered care provided by a multidisciplinary care team from Ventura County Health Care Agency's FQHCs, hospitals, and specialty care providers as well as the County Behavioral Health Department for mental health and alcohol and drug services.

The team ensures that participants receive vital social services and supports, such as shelter and housing transition and tenancy services, as well as transportation, healthy food, clothing, and personal hygiene supplies. Life skills and job readiness training are available as participants improve and transition to self-sufficiency.

Homeless participants can receive services through "Mobile Outreach Care Pods" that provide showers, limited scope medical services, and other offerings from a host of County agency and community social service partners geared towards meeting immediate needs and putting participants on a path towards stability. Recuperative care provides a safe place for homeless individuals to recover following hospitalization, so they are not discharged to the streets or other unsafe living conditions.

How are participants enrolled?

Eligible participants are pre-identified based on health plan data and flagged in a health registry, so that any provider (not just partner organizations) are notified and able to offer the appropriate referrals. Field outreach is also conducted in community clinics, shelters, and homeless encampments, to reach eligible individuals who are not yet enrolled. Nurses also engage potential enrollees at mobile shower stations operated by VCHCA, which are made available periodically at different locations.

How is data being shared?

Medical, behavioral and social service data is stored in a data warehouse and can be accessed and updated by WPC partners. This allows members of the care coordination team to effectively manage each patient's care. Ventura County's WPC pilot is working towards utilizing a web-based platform that can be used as a telemedicine consultation system and a patient registry. A data governance committee helps to ensure information shared across providers and disciplines is accomplished within the bounds of existing legislation and ethical standards.

Early Success:

In September 2017, WPC received a referral from Pathways Recuperative Care for John Chavez, a 49-year-old homeless man, recovering from wounds and a serious infection on his leg. WPC's care coordinator, Reuben Juarez, met with him that day. After learning that Mr. Chavez wanted to get clean and leave his life on the streets, Reuben connected him to a sober living home.

Five months later, Mr. Chavez has a positive outlook on life, is living sober, working and seeing a primary care doctor. Describing his experience, Mr. Chavez says he "...was looking to change and was fortunate to have met the right people... Reuben is special to me."

"Regular and early engagement in a well-coordinated environment is necessary to improve the health and lives of our most vulnerable. If those lines of communication are kept open – between our team and the patient, and between partner organizations – we can better determine and meet each person's specific needs, improve their health, and help prevent overutilization."

— Johnson Gill, Director

Ventura County Health Care Agency