

SARASOTA COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Health and Human Services

TO: Sarasota County Commission
THROUGH: Thomas A. Harmer, County Administrator
FROM: Charles H. Henry, MPA, Director, Sarasota County Health and Human Services
Robert R. Lewis, Director, Community and Intergovernmental Relations
DATE: October 19, 2016
SUBJECT: **Update on Department of Health Federally Qualified Health Centers for primary health care**

RECOMMENDED MOTION(S) OR ACTION(S):

Sarasota County will present an update on Department of Health Federally Qualified Health Centers for primary health care.

BACKGROUND:

Sarasota County's Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) is a partnership between the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) and the nonprofit, Community Health Center of Sarasota County (CHCSC). The DOH-Sarasota serves as the medical services provider. The program has successfully provided primary care, dental, behavioral health, pharmacy, and lab work services to almost 30,000 citizens, including 13,700 children for a number of years.

In 2015, the county was advised that the Florida Department of Health directed those local health offices which provided primary care, were not to renew their federal Affordable Care Act grants. The local health offices were directed to withdraw from primary care services. Subsequent to that direction the commission authorized an aggressive advocacy effort seeking approval by the state for the retention of the current model.

The Charlotte County Commission wrote to the Florida DOH in March 2015 indicating its support of the continuation of the program in Sarasota County. It was noted by Charlotte County that after the elimination of primary care at their health department, extra pressures were placed on the free clinics in their county and that not every patient could always be seen.

On April 17, 2015 the Sarasota County Commission discussed the issue with the Charlotte County Commission in a joint public meeting. At that meeting, commissioners from both counties stressed the importance of the program to the former DOH Deputy Secretary Barnhill, who was in attendance and spoke to the two commissions.

The two commissions discussed the issue again in a joint meeting held on November 3, 2015 at which time the staff reported that Sarasota County was given approval to apply for another three year period of Federal Affordable Care Act grants.

On December 2, 2015 DOH-Sarasota re-applied for the grant and was advised on April 15, 2016 of the acceptance of the grant. The current grant period ends on April 30, 2019.

RELEVANT PRIOR BOARD ACTION:

1. March 3, 2015 – the Board directed the County Administrator to draft a letter to the State Surgeon General supporting continuance of the FQHC (5-0 vote).
2. March 3, 2015 – the Board directed the County Administrator to draft a letter to the Charlotte County Commission regarding possible loss of FQHC in Sarasota County (5-0 vote).
3. March 17, 2015 – the Board requested the Chair to send a letter of thanks to Charlotte County for sending a letter to the DOH Surgeon General regarding FQHC.
4. April 17, 2015 – the Board discussed the FQHC with the Charlotte County Commission and the former DOH Deputy Secretary.
5. October 13, 2015 – the Board approved the Chair to send a letter to the State Surgeon General related to the Community Health Centers of Sarasota County and requested the County Administrator prepare a transmittal letter of such along with thanks to the legislative delegation for support.
6. November 3, 2015 – in a joint meeting with Charlotte County Commission, the Board discussed a staff update regarding approval from DOH to reapply for the next cycle of federal grants.

OUTREACH:

Since the initial communication from the state in the spring of 2015, county staff has continued an aggressive advocacy effort seeking allowance to continue the existing FQHC program. County intergovernmental relations staff has coordinated multiple meetings with State Legislative delegation members, local DOH staff, and the Secretary of Florida DOH.

Multiple letters from the Sarasota County Commission were sent to the Surgeon General and Governor urging the state to allow the county to continue with the successful model of providing primary care through a FQHC. In addition letters of support were sent by state legislative members, Charlotte County, the Town of Longboat Key, and the City of North Port.

During this timeframe there has been a change in leadership at Florida DOH. On August 17, 2016 county administration and intergovernmental staff met with the new Secretary and Surgeon General, Dr. Celeste Philip. Staff stressed that Sarasota County's model is a very successful example of a FQHC public/private partnership. It was staff's understanding that the Surgeon General felt that as long as a transition is being explored to a nonprofit model, there would be no pressure to meet a pre-determined deadline and no concern with an arrangement that would allow the CHCSC to contract back with DOH-Sarasota. Attached is a follow up letter sent to Secretary Philip restating that understanding.

PROCUREMENT ACTION:

N/A

ANALYSIS/NEXT STEPS:

The current federal grant period was approved on April 15, 2016. The grants will provide funding through April 30, 2019.

Staff has continued to keep the state legislative delegation members updated. Based on the August 17, 2016 meeting between county staff and the Secretary of DOH and Surgeon General, it is staff's belief that the FQHC public/private partnership is recognized as being successful and that at a minimum the state will allow DOH-Sarasota to contract with the FQHC as a service provider.

Should that position change, legislation has already been drafted, but not filed, that would prohibit the state from forbidding the local health offices from contracting with FQHCs as service providers. It is staff's further conclusion that the state supports any transition period not held to a strict time certain, providing for a continued uninterrupted level of primary care.

Based on this position the local health office is working along with Community Health Centers of Sarasota County on a transition plan that would be based on meeting current service levels. The evolution of the program is expected to include a contracting relationship for certain services to be provided by DOH-Sarasota.

FUNDING:

The current funding model provides \$17 million in revenues from three main sources;

1. \$1.5 million from Sarasota County
2. \$2.1 million from the Federal Affordable Care Act
3. \$1.3 million from the State of Florida (state primary care funding & ACHA ER Diversion grant)
4. Payments from third-party insurers (primarily Medicaid and Medicare).

ATTACHMENTS:

1. August 26, 2016 letter from Lee Ann Lowery, Assistant County Administrator, to Dr. Celeste Philip, Secretary, Florida DOH.
2. FQHC Power Point



SARASOTA COUNTY

"Dedicated to Quality Service"

August 26, 2016

Dr. Celeste Philip, M.D., M.P.H.
Florida Department of Health
4052 Bald Cypress Way
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Dr. Philip:

It was a pleasure to meet with you and your staff last week in Tallahassee. We appreciate your dedication to public health and service as Secretary of the Department of Health (DOH) and Surgeon General for the State of Florida.

We were encouraged to learn that you are familiar with the services we provide in Sarasota County and that you appreciate the value of building the best local model to provide primary care.

The discussion we had regarding our Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) was particularly helpful and encouraging. Sarasota County's model is one of the most successful public/private partnerships, providing much needed primary care for more than 30,000 patients. Our collaboration with the Community Health Centers of Sarasota County, Inc. (CHCSC), a not-for-profit corporation, and the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota (DOH-Sarasota) began in 2008, and its value to our community is immeasurable. We were heartened to hear that, as we explore a transition to a nonprofit model, there is no pressure to meet a pre-determined deadline and there is no concern with an arrangement that would allow the CHCSC to contract back with DOH-Sarasota. These assurances will allow us time to evaluate and strengthen our current model without concern for large gaps in services to our citizens.

We look forward to working with you on this and other important community health issues. If you or your staff have questions, or need information, please contact Rob Lewis who joined me in meeting with you. He can be reached directly at rlewis@scgov.net or (941) 444-9532.

Sincerely,

Lee Ann Lowery
Assistant County Administrator

c: Thomas A. Harmer, County Administrator
Chuck Henry, Director, Health & Human Services
Rob Lewis, Director, Intergovernmental Relations

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

1660 Ringling Boulevard, 2nd Floor, Sarasota, FL 34236 telephone: 941-861-5293 fax: 941-861-5987

Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) Update

- FQHC partnership between Florida Department of Health (DOH) and nonprofit, Community Health Center of Sarasota County (CHCSC).
- DOH – Sarasota serves as medical services provider.
- Program has successfully provided primary care, dental, behavioral health, pharmacy, and lab work services to almost 30,000 citizens, including 13,700 children for years.
- 2015 - county advised that local DOH offices that provided primary care were not to renew federal Affordable Care Act grants.
- Spring 2015 - commission authorized aggressive advocacy effort seeking approval by state for retention of current model.
- March 15, 2015 - Charlotte County Commission wrote to the Florida DOH to express support of continuation of program in Sarasota County.

Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) Update

- April 17, 2015 - Commission discussed the issue with Charlotte County Commission in a joint public meeting; commissioners from both counties stressed importance of the program to the former DOH Deputy Secretary Barnhill.
- November 3, 2015 - two commissions updated on advocacy efforts; staff reported County was given approval to apply for another three year period of Federal Affordable Care Act grants.
- December 2, 2015 - DOH-Sarasota re-applied for the grant.
- April 15, 2016 - acceptance of grant; current grant period ends on April 30, 2019.
- August 17, 2016 - staff met with Florida DOH Secretary in Tallahassee; staff understood Surgeon General to indicate no pressure to meet a pre-determined transition deadline; no concern with an arrangement allowing the CHCSC to contract back with DOH-Sarasota.