



**COMMUNITY CARE
NETWORK OF KANSAS**
Health. Equity. Justice.

Health Center Telehealth Services Receive Boost from State

For Immediate Release

For more information or to schedule an interview, contact Patrick Lowry, Director of Communications and Governmental Relations, at plowry@communitycareks.org or (785) 806-3932.

TOPEKA – The COVID-19 pandemic might be testing many aspects of the state’s public health system, but also is spurring innovation. Perhaps nowhere is this more obvious than in the field of telehealth.

Early during the public health emergency, the state created regulatory flexibility so Kansans could continue receiving necessary care in new ways. Kansas health centers transformed their model of care to include telehealth to meet ongoing health needs. The use of audio and video devices has allowed patients to connect with providers for medical, dental and mental health needs without having to leave their home. Community health centers throughout Kansas report dramatic increases in medical and behavioral health visits that are safe, confidential and conducted using smartphones and laptops.

After examining that data, the Community Care Network of Kansas saw an opportunity to augment the audio and video telehealth services with clinical data. If data could be collected via remote monitoring devices and transmitted to the patient’s electronic health record or patient portal, clinics would be able to provide care more efficiently. Community Care knows that the existing digital divide does not have to result in placing the state’s most vulnerable populations at risk of experiencing increased adverse outcomes from COVID-19.

The State of Kansas agrees. The State Finance Council recently approved allocating \$3 million federal coronavirus relief funding so Community Care health centers could provide monitoring devices to their patients. This telehealth project will support at least 10,000 low-income and otherwise underserved Kansans by securely connecting portable devices to records at the health centers.

The purchase of blood pressure monitors, glucose monitors, finger-tip pulse oximeters, thermometers and electronic scales will facilitate increased patient-provider management of COVID-19 and/or chronic conditions. They also will provide important clinical data for well child, annual physicals and senior wellness visits. Regular measurements of diabetes, high blood pressure and weight, for

example, provides patient information that can be tracked without the person have to make an office visit.

“Implementing telehealth on this scale would have been unimaginable at the beginning of 2020,” said Community Care CEO Denise Cyzman. “The pandemic has prompted futuristic concepts to become present-day public health realities.”

The \$3 million was part of a \$38.5 million package recommended by the Strengthening People and Revitalizing Kansas (SPARK) task force, which also directed funding to hospitals, local health departments and nursing homes. Another \$1 million was designated to be used by state-funded community-based clinics to help offset COVID-related lost revenue and increased expenses.

“The bi-partisan support for community-based clinics and increased use of technology displayed by the governor’s office, state agencies and legislators bodes well for the neediest Kansans, their care, and the future of telehealth,” Cyzman said.

Community Care staff members already are working with health centers, vendors and suppliers to accommodate the approaching December 30 deadline.

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About Community Care Clinic of Kansas: Community Care exists to achieve equitable access to high-quality, whole-person care for all Kansans, regardless of ability to pay. As the Primary Care Association (PCA) for Kansas, Community Care supports and strengthens its members through advocacy, education and communication. Community Care’s diverse membership includes Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), and Look-Alikes (LALs), as well as public and private nonprofit Community-Based Primary Care Clinics (CBPCCs) and Rural Health Clinics (RHCs).