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September 13, 2023

To: Contra Costa Board of Supervisors

From: Anna Roth, RN, MS, MPH
CEO, Contra Costa Health

Re: Contra Costa CARES

Overview

In 2015, Contra Costa County and local hospital systems came together with community health centers, health coalitions and advocates to develop a system of primary and preventive care for uninsured residents of Contra Costa County – those who were not eligible for coverage expansion under the Affordable Care Act due to documentation status. In collaboration with these stakeholders, Contra Costa Health Plan (CCHP) established a pilot program, Contra Costa CARES, for providing primary care services to the remaining uninsured, low-income residents of Contra Costa County. Contra Costa CARES continues today, and services are provided by three community health centers: La Clínica de la Raza, Brighter Beginnings, and LifeLong Medical Care. In 2022, behavioral health was added to the primary care services.

Due to the State expansion of Medi-Cal eligibility for low-income residents of all ages regardless of documentation status on January 1, 2024, Contra Costa CARES will end on December 31, 2023.

As requested by the Board of Supervisors at the Budget Adoption Hearing of May 23, 2023, this report includes an update on the following topics:

- CARES Participants and Services Provided – including caseload trends and outcomes data
- Outreach – including contract expenditures, reporting, and outcomes data
- CalAIM transition plans – as the CARES Program sunsets on December 31, 2023
- Funding – including remaining balances for FY22-23 and spending plans for FY23-24

CARES Participants and Services Provided

Caseload trends and outcome data

Contra Costa Health Plan (CCHP) has been tracking the enrollment of CARES since inception of the program. Overall, for the entire time that CARES has been in existence, 10,989 people were enrolled in the CARES Program with more than 55,000 visits to the community health centers for primary care and behavioral health services. In June of 2023, 3,011 Contra Costa County residents were actively enrolled in Contra Costa CARES.

Aliados Health provided demographic information for the 3,011 CARES enrollees as of June 2023. Highlights of the demographics include:

- 2,684 (89%) Hispanic
- 564 (19%) Household size larger than 4 people
- 648 (22%) Household size of 1 person
- 2,451 (81%) Employed
- 1,640 (54%) Female
- 45 (1%) Non-English/Non-Spanish Speakers

The provision of primary care services through Contra Costa CARES meant that enrollees could receive diagnoses and ongoing treatment of chronic diseases. From June 2022- June 2023, the leading reasons for chronic illness visits for CARES enrollees (not including data from Lifelong) were Type 2 Diabetes (835), Hypertension (491), Prediabetes (245), Hyperlipidemia (216), Hyperthyroidism (10), and Type 1 Diabetes (38). Treatment and monitoring of chronic diseases can avoid future health impacts including morbidity and mortality.

In 2022, the Board of Supervisors authorized the addition of behavioral health services to the benefits offered to CARES enrollees. Health centers had been offering these services prior to 2022, and this allowed them to offer these services to all CARES enrollees. As with diagnosis and treatment of chronic illnesses, access to behavioral health services in the primary care setting can reduce suffering through treatment and avoid the necessity of treatment in more acute settings. Leading reasons for mental health treatment visits between January – June 2023 (not including data from Lifelong) were Depression (141), Anxiety (66), Stress (28), Substance Use (15) and Grief (10).

CARES Outreach

In 2022, CCH allocated \$800,000 for outreach to eligible residents between 26-49 years with the goal of increasing program enrollment in preparation of the State's expansion of Medi-Cal eligibility for low-income residents of all ages regardless of documentation status on January 1, 2024. CCH contracted with the Richmond Community Foundation/Healthy Contra Costa (HCC) for this outreach from July 1, 2022 – April 30, 2023. The funds were from the American Rescue Plan Act (\$500,000) and CCHP Incentive Program (\$300,000). All reports have been received, and all funds have been paid to the contractor.

New enrollments between June 2022 and June 2023 indicated that there were a total of 1,781 new enrollees during that time. This was after those who were 50 years and older became eligible for Medi-Cal in May 2022, meaning that there was a smaller group now eligible for CARES, residents of ages 26 – 49 years. Although the new enrollment was only a portion of the estimated number of county residents in that age group, it is significant that the new enrollment was higher than the previous 3 years.


CalAIM Transition Plan

CCH has been working with the Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD) to understand and coordinate the plans for expansion of Medi-Cal to all low-income residents regardless of documentation status. As with the other age groups who have gained access to Medi-Cal regardless of documentation status, residents between the ages of 26 and 49 years who are undocumented and have restricted or limited-scope Medi-Cal, on December 31, 2023 will seamlessly transition to full-scope Medi-Cal and will be able to access all the Medi-Cal benefits at that time.

Therefore, the transition planning has included determining which CARES enrollees currently do not have restricted or limited-scope Medi-Cal so that community clinics can reach out to these enrollees to enroll them before the January 1, 2024 expansion. Analysis shows that there are approximately 1,200 CARES enrollees that will be automatically transitioned, so outreach efforts can focus on the approximately 2,000 CARES enrollees that are do not currently have restricted scope Medi-Cal.

Community clinics have current processes to assist with Medi-Cal applications. Bolstering that infrastructure not only to support the smooth transition of CARES enrollees to Medi-Cal but to assist with redetermination activities over the next year will be important to ensure that those who are eligible for Medi-Cal can continue to access care. Community clinics are currently partnering with EHSD to ensure they have access to the online technology to best serve community members with applications.

Additionally, as CARES enrollees transition to Medi-Cal, they will be eligible for all Medi-Cal benefits including those offered under CalAIM. These also include an initial health assessment, access to benefits such as Enhanced Care Management and Community Supports depending on eligibility and maintaining their medical home with the community clinics.



Outreach, awareness and educational campaigns about Medi-Cal eligibility and benefits are happening at the State level. In order to encourage those who are undocumented to apply for Medi-Cal, it will be important to address common questions related to the impact of Medi-Cal enrollment such as public charge, as well as to ensure that county residents are aware of the CCHP provider network, including community clinics, who have been the medical home for CARES participants.

Funding

Funding from Hospitals, County and Contra Costa Health Plan


The Contra Costa CARES annual budget historically included a County general purpose revenue contribution of \$250,000, CCHP revenue contribution of \$500,000, and \$750,000 in private hospital matching donations for a total annual program budget of \$1,500,000. Beginning in FY22-23, the private hospital donations ceased. However, contributions for FY 22-23 and FY 23-24 from the County general purpose revenue (\$250,000 for each fiscal year) and CCHP (\$500,000 for each fiscal year) continued for those fiscal years. The total amount of funding allocated to CARES from the inception of the program from all of these sources is \$9,750,000. As of July 31, 2023, the amount spent for CARES direct services (not including additional services such as behavioral health) was \$7,925,848. Estimated expenditures between August – December 2023 are \$428,960, leaving an unspent balance of \$1,395,192 at the end of 2023.

Of the remaining estimated unspent funds of \$1,395,192, Contra Costa Health will refund \$500,000 to the County general purpose revenue fund for FY 22-23 and FY 23-24 contributions, and refund \$895,192 to CCHP for the contribution for FY 22-23 and a portion of their contribution for FY 23-24 at the conclusion of CARES.

In order to ensure a smooth transition from CARES to Medi-Cal, it is critical to enhance the Medi-Cal enrollment infrastructure at the community clinics and in the community. Therefore, CCHP will allocate \$300,000 from the CCHP Incentive Fund to the three community clinic systems (Lifelong, La Clinica and Brighter Beginnings) to assist with Medi-Cal outreach and enrollment so that the CARES members assigned to them can be notified and assisted with the transition to full-scope Medi-Cal. Additionally, CCHP will allocate \$300,000 for community-based education and enrollment efforts about Medi-Cal.

Measure X Funding

In FY 22-23 and FY 23-24, \$750,000 in Measure X funds were allocated for each of those fiscal years by the Board of Supervisors to expand the services offered to include behavioral health for a total of \$1,500,000 in Measure X funds. Of these funds as of July 31, 2023, \$960,467 will have been expended related to the increase in services and between August – December 2023, there will be an estimated \$383,000 spent, resulting in an estimated unspent balance of



\$156,533 at the end of 2023. Contra Costa Health will refund the unspent balance to the Measure X fund at the conclusion of CARES.

Conclusion

Since 2015, Contra Costa CARES has provided critical access to primary and behavioral health care for income-eligible county residents who were not originally eligible for Medi-Cal due to documentation status. As the State has expanded Medi-Cal to all age groups as of January 1, 2024, Contra Costa CARES is no longer needed as Medi-Cal provides a fuller spectrum of benefits and ends the disparity for health access and coverage that had previously existed for this population. We are grateful to the Board of Supervisors as well as local hospitals, our county, community clinics and community partners for support of this program over the past 8 years as Contra Costa CARES has been a demonstrable commitment toward equity in health access and coverage.