



MOSES/WEITZMAN
Health System

Volume II, Winter 2024

Healthcare in Focus



*A dental exam occurring at the 2024
Stand Down event supporting veterans.*

Unwavering in Our Commitment

We have always believed there is more that unites us than divides us.

Election Day is behind us, the country is moving forward, and we remain as strong as ever in our pursuit of equitable and effective healthcare for all.

At MWHS, our dedication to providing high-quality, accessible care for all remains unwavering. In this time of transition, we want to reassure you that we will continue to uphold and strengthen our services, particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalized members of our community.

As a community-based organization, MWHS relies largely on public funding and is therefore highly vulnerable to shifts in government priorities. This means the role of private support is vital to sustaining and expanding services and ensuring equitable access to care for all.

We understand the challenges we face, but we also recognize the immense strength of our shared commitment to building a healthier future for everyone. Thank you for standing with us and the many individuals, families, and communities that rely on our services.

Together, we will remain a positive force for change. ■

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School-Based Health Centers: A Lifeline for Students

School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) play a critical role in supporting the health and well-being of students in Connecticut. Recognizing the importance of meeting patients where they are, CHC launched its first SBHC in the early '90s. This innovative approach to healthcare – offering services in the places where children spend most of their time – proved highly effective and the model has since been replicated across the state.

Today, CHC's network is the largest school based health program in CT and one of the largest in the country, providing comprehensive medical, dental, and behavioral health services to students at over 150 locations statewide, regardless of their insurance coverage.

By offering services directly in schools, SBHCs eliminate common barriers to care such as transportation issues, financial limitations, and accessibility. Some centers offer comprehensive care but most focus on one or two areas of greatest need as identified by school administrators. For many students, SBHCs serve as a bridge to primary care providers, ensuring that they stay up to date on physical exams, immunizations, and specialty care.

"Each community has different needs and we're learning how to shift and change

to provide care," said Ida Pierre, Director, CHC School Based Health Services. "We want to strengthen communities for these kids so they can feel empowered to make decisions and advocate for their own health."

One of CHC's most significant innovations introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic was the expansion of telehealth services at SBHCs for medical and behavioral health using TytoCare. Through virtual care, SBHCs are able to reach more students, particularly those in rural or remote areas, ensuring that all patients receive quality care even without a provider being physically present.

Being part of the school and community culture is also key to building lasting partnerships, as well as ensuring best possible care. Without boots on the ground in every school, SBHC providers rely on school staff and administrators to identify problems and alert them when services are needed. School nurses in particular are an integral partner with SBHC providers. They are the trusted healthcare link between student and parent, but they have limitations and are often the first person to refer a student to SBHC's care.

Another way in which SBHCs continue to grow and reach more students is

through our new mobile dental vans that will provide dental care in communities without a fixed CHC location.

Additionally, SBHCs are piloting a self-scheduling tool with the intention of empowering students to ask for help and take initiative in their own healthcare. This is particularly valuable for teens, a demographic that has seen a rise in mental health crises and often struggles when communicating their needs with parents/guardians.

Program sustainability is top of mind for SBHC staff as they look to expand to new locations while continuing to provide exemplary care at current sites. CHC's SBHCs rely on a combination of funding sources, including federal and state grants and private donors, but the costs of setting up and maintaining health centers can be high. Providers start at many schools with no space or resources and must create a medical, dental, or behavioral health office on-site and stock it with all necessary supplies.

As centers expand, the high-quality holistic care given by our SBHC providers will remain accessible and affordable for all students in need. By providing healthcare in schools, SBHCs are helping to build healthier, more resilient communities. ■

Honoring 10 Years of 'Walk to End the Silence'



On Saturday, October 5, CHC's domestic violence shelter and service program, New Horizons, held its 10th Annual Walk to End the Silence in Middletown, CT. The event raised over \$6,000 from sponsors and walk participants and had support from many local businesses that donated items to the raffle. Over 100 people were in attendance, sporting purple shirts, capes, and accessories to support domestic violence awareness.

The walk began ten years ago in response to a horrific 2014 domestic violence case that resulted in the death of a child and rocked the city of Middletown. It has grown significantly in the last decade, with ever expanding community support.

The goal of the walk is to raise awareness about domestic violence and the services New Horizons provides, and to raise funds to support those they help. When people flee domestic violence situations they, and their children, often leave with nothing but the clothes on their backs. When they get to the shelter, New Horizons provides them with what they need to not just survive, but to thrive and to live with dignity. Generous donors allow us to do even more, providing furniture and mattresses for their new life and gift cards to stores where they can buy their own clothes and supplies.

"The walk really is a way to pay tribute to victims and survivors, and make sure that no one is ever alone," said Kasey Harding, CHC Director of the Center for Key Populations. "We will give support and we will give shelter. There is always someone with expertise and compassion to talk to. Our motto guides us and was on the back of our event t-shirts: Nobody Walks Alone."

New Horizons is ready to step up for those in need through its 24-hour hotline compassionate advocates, counseling and safety planning, court advocacy, emergency shelter, primary care services, and more. All donations raised through the event go to providing necessary services to help victims and survivors of domestic violence, and raise awareness of the tools victims, survivors, and their families can access to live healthy, happy lives. ■

A Baby Shower for Families in Need

CHC hosted the inaugural Community Baby Shower on November 16, welcoming patients and families who are expecting a baby or recently gave birth.

The event provided parents with the necessary supplies, basic products, and valuable support they need to care for their babies through on-site access to local resources and essential information about relevant topics such as baby safety, lactation, mental health and so much more.

Families who attended were able to select clothes and books for their baby. They also received diapers and were gifted a brand new diaper bag full of baby essentials. Around 200 people came and enjoyed refreshments, received a complimentary family photo, and many were fortunate to go home with a raffle prize such as a stroller, bouncy seat, toy mat and more.

With all items generously donated by local stores, community organizations and individuals, CHC was proud to be able to provide these parents the tools to ensure the health and safety of their children. CHC thanks everyone involved in making this inaugural event a success. ■



2024 Year In Review

It's the season of celebration, so what better time to look back on all the incredible accomplishments MWHs affiliates and programs had in 2024. From expanding early childhood mental healthcare through the Child Guidance Center of Southern CT to increasing access to dental services for our senior populations—and so much more! On these pages, we'll provide a few highlights of the past year from across MWHs.

Direct Services

The **Mobile Health Program Team** developed and implemented a **strategic outreach and engagement plan** which included stops at sites across CT where individuals are experiencing significant barriers in accessing healthcare.



The **Center for Key Populations** was awarded a **grant** to develop an infrastructure for our Mobile Health Program and increase availability of services in non-traditional settings for individuals living with HIV.



As a partner in the Prescription for Play program, the **Weitzman Institute** supplied **participating pediatric care providers with toolkits**, including LEGO® DUPLO® bricks and educational materials, to promote play during routine wellness visits for young children. The program impacts hundreds of thousands of children every year, particularly in under-resourced communities.

At our community partner Children's Learning Centers of Fairfield County's preschools, **CGC expanded school-based health center services** to include onsite specialized early childhood mental health assessment and treatment, individual & group play therapy, caregiver support, family therapy, and more



CHC's Medical teams increased services to address the growing need for refugee health across CT and expanded access to care through additional training and support for providers.

In partnership with the Danish technology company Melatech, **ConferMED** launched a **new program** "DermLoop," a new AI-supported image capture device to assist front line providers with diagnosing and treating skin conditions via econsults.



CHC providers completed over **10,000 routine HIV tests** and over **6,000 Hepatitis C tests** across CT in an effort to screen patients for needed services. The HIV Prevention Team is working in tandem with providers to identify patients who have tested positive for STI's or are high risk for contracting HIV and offering them education and initiation for PrEP.



Responding to an emerging need in Tampa, FL, ConferMED developed a **first in the nation educational and support program for Infusion Medicine** in primary care to address significant disparities in access to medications delivered via infusion.



The National Institute for Medical Assistant Advancement's spring 2024 cohort was their largest ever graduating class.

To address the critical shortage in behavioral health providers and increase patient access to care, **CHC's behavioral health program trained 90 students, interns, and residents** this past year in psychology, psychiatry, marriage and family therapy, social work, counseling, and psychiatric nursing, at all levels.



In May 2024, MWHS's **Consortium for Advanced Practice Providers** Received federal recognition from the **U.S. Department of Education** for its **expansion of scope petition** to include the accreditation of joint nurse practitioner and physician associate/assistant training programs to its current federal recognition.



Year In Review

Education & Training



In conjunction with the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, **Weitzman ECHO faculty developed a guide for youth-serving primary care and mental health providers** who work on issues of childhood trauma to ensure enhanced equitable care and improve patient outcomes.

Human Rights Month: Health as a Human Right

This December, as we observe International Human Rights Day and Month, we reflect on one of the most pressing principles of our time: health as a fundamental human right. The international theme for 2024 is “Our Rights, Our Future, Right Now” to highlight that human rights impact everyone, every day, and no right showcases this better than health.

Health is central to human dignity. It affects our ability to work, to learn, and to engage meaningfully within our communities. However, across the United States and the world, too many people face barriers to accessing quality care. From financial hardship to systemic inequities, these barriers disproportionately impact marginalized groups, exacerbating cycles of poverty and poor health.

At MWHS, our mission is to advocate for and preserve this right by ensuring every individual has equitable access to care, regardless of their circumstances. We recognize the challenges and are committed to closing these gaps in the communities we serve and beyond. We believe that healthcare should be rooted in primary care that is proactive, not reactive-- designed to prevent illness and promote healthy living. We remain committed to the vision of health as a human right by addressing social determinants of health, fostering inclusive practices, innovating and transforming the current healthcare landscape, and working collaboratively with the communities we serve.

MWHS's many affiliates and programs work to remove barriers to accessing high quality, affordable and appropriate care.

ConferMED was developed to address the challenges of obtaining specialty consultations and coordinating care with specialists, particularly in rural and low-income areas. It provides primary care providers with the tools to consult with specialists and provide the best possible care to their patients while removing barriers of access and costs that are usually associated with specialists.

The Center for Key Populations (CKP) is a program of CHC with the mission of providing primary care and social services to all, particularly underserved communities including LGBTQIA+, individuals and families living with HIV/Hepatitis C, migrant workers, refugees, and those struggling with substance abuse. They also facilitate the *Wherever You Are* initiative which provides medical care to those experiencing homelessness or housing instability within underserved communities throughout CT.

CHC also focuses on maternal health, and in 2023 opened the IMON! Center (Improving Maternal Outcomes Now!) in New Britain, to offer holistic, patient-centered perinatal care to ensure a healthy pregnancy, delivery, and recovery for all. The IMON! Center supports patients through every stage of pregnancy with culturally sensitive and linguistically inclusive care designed to combat maternal mortality and morbidity, particularly among women of color. With a dedicated team of specialists—including a nurse midwife, care coordinator, community health worker, and lactation consultant—the center provides group-based care that builds trust and strengthens community ties. By expanding access to equitable, high-quality care, the IMON! Center is just one of many programs at MWHS that embodies our mission to uphold healthcare as a human right, creating healthier families and communities one patient at a time.

This International Human Rights Month, let us renew our commitment to this cause. Let us advocate for policies that uphold health equity, support organizations that expand access to care, and challenge systems that perpetuate inequality. In 1966, in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Medical Committee for Human Rights, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. reminded the world, “Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.”

Together, we can build a future where healthcare as a human right is not just a mission statement, but a lived reality for all. ■



Make Your Year-End Gift

Before 2024 ends, there's still a chance for you to support our programs and help us work toward health equity in Connecticut, the nation, and beyond!

As you can see inside these pages, we've accomplished incredible things together this past year. Let's keep the momentum going! With your ongoing support, we can make an even bigger difference in the coming year for vulnerable and at-risk populations in need of integrated primary care and specialized services.

Every contribution, no matter the size, directly impacts the lives of those we serve! To learn more about other ways of giving, such as stock or estate, contact our Development Team at development@mwhs1.com.

All of us at MWHS wish you and your loved ones a happy holiday season and a bright new year. ■

Making a gift is as easy
as scanning the QR
code below!



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MOSES/WEITZMAN
Health System
Always groundbreaking. Always grounded.

