

## Expanding and Improving Access to Primary Care Hays Medical Center, KS First Care Clinic, Hays, KS



In 2006, access to primary care was a growing concern in this part of western Kansas. HaysMed operated a one-day free clinic, but the demand for care was exceeding the supply. Something bigger and more accessible was a strategic priority. The board and administration of HaysMed proposed creating an FQHC in Hays, KS as a solution. They found an answer in the First Care Clinic, Inc. (FCC) in Hays, KS, a federally funded community health center, providing non-emergency medical services for people of all ages, regardless of a patient's ability to pay.

### Overview:



Hays Medical Center (HMC) is a general medical and surgical hospital with 207 beds. Additional services include pediatric care along with cardiac, neonatal and intensive care units; cancer, joint and spine care, diagnostic imaging and eye surgery center; emergency department, rehabilitation, hospice and lifeline. A total of 6,696 admissions and 173,321 outpatient procedures documented last year, while the medical group's specialty and rural health clinics accounted for more than 145,464 office visits. In addition the DeBakey Heart Institute had 2,374 admissions while the Dreiling/Schmidt Cancer Institute provided services to 2,580. Last year 721 births were also recorded at the hospital while 13,644 patients were seen in the Emergency Department.



FCC located in Hays with a satellite clinic in Victoria, KS is committed to providing quality services to Ellis County and the surrounding areas. FCC provides primary medical and dental care using a team of healthcare providers. In 2015 FCC provided over 12,000 visits to almost 5,000 patients. FCC is staffed by a physician Medical Director who leads a team of APRNs and LSCSWs as they work to provide care in an integrated setting. Included in this integrated setting is a comprehensive dental department led by the Dental Director and staffed with an additional dentist and multiple dental hygienists. The integrated care provided by FCC is accomplished using a single electronic patient record across all services which in turn increases patient safety.

FCC offers many other types of ancillary services as well including prescription assistance to patients who do not have any type of insurance (private or public), certified navigator assistance for marketplace enrollment and access to a KanCare enrollment specialist. FCC services are provided on a sliding fee scale to those who qualify and the clinic accepts most major insurances. FCC is a National Health Service Corps approved site and was certified by NCQA as a Level 3 patient-centered medical home in 2013.

### Strategic Collaboration

HaysMed has supported FCC for over ten years as a partner, not a competitor. FCC began as a free clinic staffed one night per week until demand exceeded supply; the clinic hours were then expanded.

The leadership of HaysMed and FCC saw an opportunity to complement one another with FCC providing primary care, dental care and mental health services and HMC providing the balance of imaging, lab and other ancillary services to the community.

The partnership is one of collaboration with HaysMed executives routinely meeting with the executive director of FCC to discuss community health priorities, imaging services, hospital discharge protocol and medications, and streamlining patient transfers among other things. The benefits of FCC to HaysMed include an access to care for uninsured patients and a medical home or access point that reduces readmissions.



Historically HaysMed has provided financial support to help cover the cost of the staff responsible for assisting patients with the pharmaceutical assistance programs. In addition HaysMed arranged negotiations for the building from which the clinic operates.

### **Governance**

As in any relationship between an FQHC and a hospital, the boards of trustees remain independent. However, HaysMed has a representative on the FCC finance committee; this relationship fosters communication and fiscal transparency between the two providers.

### **Next Steps**

Leaders at HaysMed continue to support FCC as access to primary care services remain a priority. HaysMed and FCC have collaborated on development of the community's health needs assessment to improve the population's health and have established programs such as the Kansas Heart/Stroke Collaborative with the University of Kansas to address the growing needs of chronic care patients.

### **Advice to Others**

By focusing on the needs of the community the relationship between HaysMed and FCC has added value through greater access and better coordinated care. Open lines of communication between the leaders of each provider organization have enhanced patient services and processes to the advantage of the community.

Finally, the leaders at HaysMed emphasize that "they" are not the enemy. There is enough business for everyone. Each provider brings value and their strengths complement one another. Through regular communication HaysMed and FCC can avoid "stepping on one another's toes" and any unnecessary and expensive duplication of services.