

Integrating patient care with human and social services



Chadron Community Hospital & Health Services Chadron, Neb.

Weaving health, human and social services into the fabric of an integrated system of care is characteristic of many frontier hospitals although it may be easily overlooked as innovative. Non-medical, non-emergent needs otherwise known as the social determinants of health, are often intricately tied to personal health and well-being. For decades, rural communities have pooled resources to improve population health, expand access and reduce per capita costs by attending to these social determinants. Chadron Community Hospital and Health Services (CCH&HS) is an excellent example of this kind of resourcefulness.

Located in the northwest corner of the Nebraska panhandle, CCH&HS has the unique opportunity to serve patients from rural areas in Nebraska, eastern Wyoming and southern South Dakota including the Pine Ridge Native American reservation. Its nearest tertiary healthcare systems lie 100 miles to the north and 100 miles to the southwest. In addition to its role as a full service critical access hospital (CAH), Harold Krueger, CEO has cultivated diverse partners from across the region to form alliances. CCH&HS has collaborated with various organizations and agencies to provide a range of health care and social services to the citizens of the tristate area.



Chadron Community Hospital offers medical and surgical care, obstetrics and newborn care, emergency care, and rehabilitation services. Also available are a wide range of visiting specialists, who come to Chadron to see their patients, bringing specialty care closer to home. The hospital is served by licensed ground transport, 2 helicopter services and a fixed wing airplane. However, CCH&HS is more than a health care provider. It also addresses the community health needs of the 15,000

residents of this vast region by attending to the social determinants of health.

Valuing the importance of shared assets, strategic collaborations were made among area providers and agencies to expand services and reduce costly duplication. Western Community Health Resources (WCHR) is an extension of CCH&HS. It is led by a small

group of hospital administrators from the communities of Chadron, Crawford and Gordon. WCHR applied for and received funding for the programs of Women Infant and Children, immunizations, family reproductive health, commodity supplemental food program, HIV testing and counseling, and maternal and child health.

Additional collaborations led to re-opening the Closer to Home Soup Kitchen in downtown Chadron, the creation of a public dental health clinic and a partnership with the Circle of Life nonprofit to provide financial assistance to patients undergoing cancer treatment. Collectively, the hospital participates in three different food banks and partners with two community action agencies and it is a member of the Nebraska Northwest Development Corporation to promote and assist responsible economic development across the region.

Mr. Krueger has served as chairman of the Chadron Housing Authority (CHA), which administers management and oversight of 100 USDA/FHA apartment units assisting low income, elderly, and disabled individuals with assistance in securing affordable housing. The CHA also oversees 85, Section-8 housing vouchers helping low income families secure affordable housing.

The hospital works with the local college and primary school systems to provide various nursing services, in addition to developing an alcohol education program with area law enforcement agencies. In partnership with Chadron State College, the health system offers a medical clinic staffed by providers on a weekly basis.

CCH&HS led the organization of the Rural Nebraska Healthcare Network, a consortium of rural hospitals and related clinics that has coordinated a unified telehealth care system for western Nebraska that spans 12 counties, connects nine primary care hospitals and dozens of affiliated health care clinics, and provides access to the National LambdaRail and Internet2 research networks. It has improved the diagnostic capabilities of the participating hospitals as telemedicine originating sites linked to Denver facilities.

True to its mission to promote a culture of health, the system has a successful employee wellness program with more than 70% participation rate. The hospital's health risk assessment shows the wellness program has contributed to nearly 10% drop in the number of employees at risk for diabetes.

CCH&HS has been imaginative and innovative in delivering high quality patient care and improving the health of its population by attending to the social determinants. Whether it is through shelter, food, jobs transportation or direct patient care CCH&HS is one of many examples of frontier hospitals improving the health of its population through collaboration and integration of scarce community resources.

