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5-18-2018

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Recommended Citation

Georgia Health Policy Center, "Local Financing Innovations Allegheny County Health Department (Pennsylvania)" (2018). *GHPC Briefs*. 29.

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LOCAL FINANCING INNOVATIONS

ALLEGHENY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT (PENNSYLVANIA)

Sites have a track record of innovation in their communities that predates their involvement with Bridging for Health: Improving Community Health Through Innovations in Financing, sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. This series allows site leaders to reflect on innovations aimed at financing improvements in population health already underway in their communities. This reflection of ongoing work can serve to possibly reinvigorate existing efforts (e.g., expand scope or partners) or inspire others interested in spreading such innovations to other communities.

In asking communities to think about their existing innovative work at creating health system change, the Georgia Health Policy Center facilitators established the following criteria to select relevant efforts. Innovations highlighted in this series address upstream drivers of health, do not solely rely upon grants, involve multisector partners, and maintain a long-term focus, rather than fixing an immediate community need.

The Public Health Improvement Fund

In 2014, the Public Health Improvement Fund was established to support the Allegheny County Health Department and its new director. Allegheny County's philanthropic sector historically worked together to improve the region's well-being. Their contributions helped revitalize Pittsburgh after the demise of the steel industry. The Public Health Improvement Fund represents a philanthropic collaboration and is a blended distribution fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation. It is designed to serve as a flexible funding resource to support the Allegheny County Health Department leadership in developing and strengthening its capacity and activities.



Initial investments from the Public Health Improvement Fund enabled a community health assessment and the development of the Plan for a Healthier Allegheny, the county's community health improvement plan. The Plan for a Healthier Allegheny identified five priority areas: access to care, chronic disease health risk behaviors, environment, maternal and child health, and mental health and substance use disorders. The Allegheny County Health Department serves as the backbone organization aligning efforts of the multisectoral collaborative that is committed to enacting the Plan for a Healthier Allegheny.

The mission of the Public Health Improvement Fund was subsequently expanded in 2016 to fund innovative public health projects addressing the needs identified in the Plan for a Healthier Allegheny. While the health department leadership team applies for the funding and manages these projects, they look to the partner organizations within the Plan for a Healthier Allegheny workgroups to identify innovative initiatives.

Since 2016, two projects aligned with needs in the plan have been funded: the purchase of the overdose-reversal drug naloxone to be distributed to partner organizations, and a position at the health department to manage a task force dedicated to analyzing data on asthma in order to identify the most impactful intervention to reduce emergency room visits.

Access to Healthy Food

In 2014, the Allegheny County Health Department partnered with the Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank, Just Harvest, and Fit United (all members of the advisory coalition) to develop innovative strategies to enhance access to fresh and healthy food. Richard King Mellon provided philanthropic support to launch a variety of programs, including the Green Grocer (a mobile fresh food market) and Fresh Access, which enabled increased access to farmer's markets through acceptance of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program's electronic benefit transfer (SNAP's EBT).



Just Harvest, along with Pittsburgh Citiparks and participating local farmers, initially launched Fresh Access at the East Liberty and North Side farmer's markets in order to expand access to fresh, healthy food. Today, the program operates at a total of 22 locations in Allegheny County. Fresh Access Food Bucks give EBT shoppers an extra \$2 to spend on fruits and veggies for every \$5 they spend.

As of December 2017, Fresh Access' sales totaled almost \$800,000. In addition to sales, Fresh Access receives support from the Live Well Allegheny program of the Allegheny County Health Department, grants from several private foundations, and a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grant Program via Food Trust.

BUILD

The challenges in Pittsburgh's North Side neighborhoods are great with 40% of children living in poverty, one in three students chronically absent from school, and high rates of undiagnosed mental health issues and chronic diseases. Project Destiny, and a coalition of Pittsburgh nonprofits, won a BUILD Health Challenge \$250,000 grant — with \$500,000 in local matching funds to improve well-being for the 41,000 residents of 18 North Side neighborhoods. Matched funding and in-kind support came from the Buhl Foundation (\$250,000), Highmark Health (\$250,000), Allegheny General Hospital, and the Allegheny County Health Department.



Funding will be used to create the One Northside Center for Lifting Up everyBody (One Northside CLUB), which will strive to improve health by addressing the social determinants of individual and community well-being. This coalition will focus on highly vulnerable populations that are dual-eligible for Medicaid and Medicare, low-income, and often chronically ill. The CLUB will connect residents with integrated supports through outreach workers, a centralized wellness center, and enhanced data collection for tracking health outcomes. Initially, much of the money will be spent hiring two full-time managers at the CLUB, and up to eight new, part-time community health workers who will go door-to-door looking for people and families who need help and identify which social determinants of health are most affecting the community.

Transportation Navigator

A lack of transportation can be a substantial barrier to patients trying to access health care. The four Federally-Qualified Health Centers of the East Liberty Family Health Care Center and local transportation providers (ACCESS Transit and the Port Authority of Allegheny County) are working to ensure all patients have the means to make it to their medical appointments.

During patient scheduling, clinic staff ask patients if they have transportation to their next appointment. If they do not, they will be referred to a navigator, who will help them identify low-cost or free transportation options.



A 2017 pilot of the Transportation Navigator program cut the missed appointment rate to zero for patients who interacted with the navigator. The feasibility of the expansion is being assessed to estimate anticipated call volume to the navigator and whether additional capacity will be required. Additionally, the transportation pilot subgroup of the Access workgroup is exploring means to expand the program to all clinics and hospitals.