



Community

Partnerships between Catholic Charities and Catholic Healthcare Organizations

Like other healthcare organizations in the United States, Catholic healthcare facilities are developing new relationships with a wide array of partners to extend their ministry and to improve efficiency, coordination, and quality of care.

In forming these partnerships, Catholic-sponsored organizations may have an advantage over others. Through Catholic Charities and other social service programs, the Catholic Church in the United States is the largest provider of human services. In addition, the Church's network of almost 20,000 parishes enables healthcare organizations to reach into communities where little infrastructure exists. The current movement toward integration of community-based health and social services creates opportunities for Church-sponsored organizations to work together as never before.

Health Progress publishes an ongoing series of case studies of such partnerships, hoping they might serve as models for those creating integrated systems of care. These case studies of Catholic Charities agencies and Catholic health organizations were prepared by the Catholic Health Association as part of *New Covenant*, an initiative designed to promote collaborative efforts of the Catholic health ministry at the national and regional levels.

Here is another case study. *Health Progress* will present others in future issues.

If your healthcare organization is collaborating with a Catholic Charities agency in your area, we would like to know about it. Please contact Julie Trocchio by phone at 202-296-3993 or by e-mail at jtrocch@chausa.org.

Networks

Valley View High-Rise

Wilkes-Barre, PA

Organizational Structure

Valley View High-Rise is a collaboration involving Mercy Health Partners Northeast Region (MHP); Catholic Social Services, Diocese of Scranton (CSS); the Marywood College School of Social Work; Project REMAIN, sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy Regional Community, Dallas, which ministers to senior citizens living in local high-rise apartments; the Luzerne/Wyoming County Area Agency on Aging; and HealthSPAN, a Sisters of Mercy/MHP-sponsored organization that provides health services and advocacy to uninsured and underinsured people.

Goals of Affiliation

In the 1970s, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) constructed a number of high-rise apartment buildings for low-income people living in the Wilkes-Barre area. Today many of those people have become elderly and need assistance if they are to remain independent. The healthcare and social services provided by Valley View High-Rise will help them stay out of nursing homes.

The Project

The program will be based on a floor of Valley View Senior Hi-Rise, a building owned by the Wilkes-Barre Housing Authority. On this floor will live 20 elderly people who will get help with such activities as meals, bathing, dressing, keeping track of medication, and transportation (to physicians' offices, for example). There will be an on-site clinic, which a physician will staff once a week.

As many as 400 other seniors will also receive some of these services, although they will remain in their own buildings. They will get meals on a sliding scale, for instance. (The 20 who move to the new floor will receive meals, along with other services, free.)

The program was launched in January when the collaborating agencies received a \$152,000 HUD

grant. With this money, the agencies developed an assessment tool and recruited a staff to use it to determine which elderly high-rise dwellers will be eligible for the program's services. The collaborating agencies hope to have the program in operation by the end of the summer.

Governance Structure

The leaders of the collaborating agencies will work on a "handshake basis." A more formal relationship will be created in the future.

Staff and Budget

CSS's executive director and MHP's vice president for progressive services will direct the program. Each of the collaborating agencies will lend staff members (e.g., MHP will furnish transportation, a physician, and a nurse; CSS will furnish social workers; and Marywood College will furnish a social work instructor and administer the assessment tool).

Aside from the original HUD grant, budgeting will also be informal. Each partner will contribute on an in-kind basis.

Effect on Community

The collaborating agencies hope the program will, by integrating health and social services in senior housing programs:

- Enable a higher percentage of frail and vulnerable seniors to live independently, rather than in nursing homes
- Reduce the number of hospitalizations and emergency room visits needed by such seniors

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Practical Advice

If you're launching a similar project, be sure to take advantage of existing services offered by local community agencies. There is a tendency to overlook such services or take them for granted.