

# Coming Together for Community Health

A Success Story with Project Access-New Haven



2021

## AT A GLANCE

Over the past three years, the Community Alliance for Research & Engagement (CARE) has partnered with Project Access New Haven (PA-NH) to connect New Haven residents to health and social services, as part of the REACH community-clinical linkages (CCL) strategy. At the heart of this work is the PA-NH Community Health Worker (CHW), who supports residents by identifying unmet needs, providing referrals to services, and sustaining support to navigate barriers. Since our start in food pantries, we have expanded our partnership to include clinical programs, connecting over 125 residents to community services. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, our team has rapidly adapted to provide ongoing virtual support and has co-led efforts to help residents access flu and COVID-19 vaccinations.

## STARTING A PARTNERSHIP

New Haven residents continue to face deep economic, social, and health disparities. In New Haven's low-income neighborhoods, which are predominantly communities of color, 34% of Black and 44% of Hispanic households live in extreme poverty, 17% of residents are unemployed, and 35% are food insecure. Lack of support services and culturally sensitive outreach limit access to community resources. In October 2019, CARE partnered with PA-NH to connect residents to local health and social services. PA-NH is a local organization that utilizes CHWs to increase access to medical care and services for underserved residents in Greater New Haven. Every week, the REACH CHW visited two food pantries to screen clients and identify areas of support, such as health, food, housing, utilities, and transportation. The CHW then provided referrals and ongoing support for six months.

## OVERCOMING COVID-19 CHALLENGES

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced mass shut-downs in March 2020, the CHW could no longer work at food pantries. The PA-NH CHW team shifted quickly to provide remote support to patients screened through its urgent specialty care program. COVID-19 caused substantial economic hardship and food insecurity in New Haven, and the need for community referrals rose significantly. With a goal of expanding the REACH CCL program, the CHW also began navigating new patients through a partnership with Yale Cardiology in the fall of 2020.

## KEEPING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Meanwhile, to maintain a connection to the food pantries, CARE and PA-NH worked together to place a social work intern from Southern Connecticut State University in pantries. The intern visited pantries regularly to provide health resources and to screen and enroll pantry clients, who were then referred to the CHW at PA-NH. Our intern team also offered resources for food access and medical referrals to over 500 homebound clients.

**62** CLIENTS  
ENROLLED FROM  
FOOD PANTRIES



My doctor told me that I needed eye surgery and that she would refer me to Project Access. When [they] called me, I was three months behind on my rent, I did not have food, and I was unable to work. Project Access helped me get my surgery - next week I can start working three days a week. [The PA-NH CHW also] helped me get food...and get \$500 to help pay my back rent.

PROJECT ACCESS PATIENT  
AUGUST 2020

**125** CLIENTS  
CONNECTED  
TO SERVICES

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## PARTNERSHIP LEADS TO NEW FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AND GROWTH

CDC REACH funding has catalyzed a successful partnership between CARE and PA-NH. Building on our original program, the two organizations have continued to grow the Community Health Worker model they developed together, applying for five new grants, with at least two funded and others pending. Grants include a new CHW intervention for hypertension management, a family-based intervention for diabetes lifestyle change programming, and three grants related to COVID-19 and flu vaccination confidence and uptake. Further expanding our partnership, CARE has included PA-NH in the Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center virtual diabetes prevention program.

**CARE AND PA-NH RECEIVED AN ADDITIONAL \$796,735 IN FUNDING TO EXPAND OUR WORK!**

### FIGHTING THE FLU

The REACH CCL strategy set the foundation for strong partnerships among CARE, PA-NH, and local food pantries, which was then quickly extended to flu vaccination outreach and education, sharing resources with PA-NH clients and food pantry guests and offering flu vaccination clinics on-site at pantries.

### COMBATTING COVID-19

With availability of COVID-19 vaccinations, our teams again mobilized to spread the word to REACH clients, other PA-NH patients, and food pantry guests. PA-NH CHWs worked at food pantries to schedule vaccination appointments, helped clients get to appointments, and followed up with reminders about second doses, when needed.

### LOOKING FORWARD

CARE and PA-NH are continuing to work together to provide comprehensive health and social services to underserved communities. While continuing to screen patients through our existing clinical partners, we are exploring new clinical partnerships and maintaining a permanent internship placement in the food pantries. Our work with PA-NH CHWs will expand as we continue to address the evolving pandemic and its related health and social consequences.



**1,347**

**PEOPLE RECEIVED FLU MESSAGING**

**1,615**

**PEOPLE RECEIVED COVID-19 VACCINE MESSAGING**

**428**

**PEOPLE LINKED TO COVID-19 VACCINE APPOINTMENTS**

“

Before COVID-19, I [had a job], but I'm not working right now. I don't drive and I don't know about resources in my community, so it has been a very hard year for my family. [The PA-NH CHW] helped me with food pantries, toy and coat drives, and SafeLink wireless. She referred me to places that can help me in the future, not just in the moment.

**PROJECT ACCESS PATIENT  
JANUARY 2021**

### CONTACT US!

If you would like to learn more information about the Project Access New Haven partnership, please email Alycia Santilli at [santillia1@southernct.edu](mailto:santillia1@southernct.edu). This project is funded by the CDC's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) program.



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