Incubator for Community Health Center development piloted

**Description:** The project Expanding Access to Care in Rural and Underserved Areas developed a capacity-building program for communities interested in starting a Community Health Center (CHC) to expand health care access. The Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association (WPHCA), in partnership with the University of Wisconsin Center for Nonprofits, created a curriculum for each phase of CHC development and began training for the first three incubator models.

**Relevance:** CHCs have helped improve access to primary care in Wisconsin; however, the state hasn’t been as successful as others in competing for federal grant funding. As part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, the federal government provides funding to create and expand CHCs across the country. This project’s CHC incubator program enhances capacity to provide subject matter expertise, technical assistance and local grant support for planning CHCs.

**Results:** Collaborating partners created a CHC incubator program model with the following four phases: community organizing, organizational development, Section 330 grant readiness and operational readiness. They also developed a checklist that outlines critical steps that must be undertaken to be successful in each phase of the process.

The checklist has been distributed to several community stakeholders throughout the project, including Beaver Dam and Sauk County free clinics, a Walworth community member interested in exploring a federally qualified health center, a Grant County community group interested in submitting a new access point, Lakeshore Community Health Center and Gays Mills community members.

To assist communities with submitting competitive grant applications, WPHCA also significantly improved its needs-for-assistance reporting tool, which guides communities that are exploring options to improve primary care access. The tool was updated with 2010 census data and streamlined for easier use. These updates prompted the development of maps that proactively identify communities with high needs for primary care.

In addition, the incubator program provided training and technical assistance regarding program requirements, opportunities for expansion and other strategies for CHC development. Much of the training was recorded and posted online for use by interested communities.

**KEY INFORMATION**

**Grantee:** Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association, Lynsey Ray

**Grant Title:** Expanding Access to Care in Rural and Underserved Areas

**Academic Partner:** Brian Christens, PhD, UW-Madison, School of Human Ecology

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**Program:** Community-Academic Partnership

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