

Increasing Access to Care in Florida with Operational Efficiencies



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Making operations more efficient contributes to increasing access to care. Streamlining workflows, reducing administrative burdens, and maximizing the use of limited resources (including staff) can make room for more appointments and free up provider time. Health centers face many operational challenges and competing priorities. Through FACHC's Operations Roundtable, emails, our Just the FACHCs newsletter, webinars, website, and other communication methods, we assist health centers across Florida in identifying and disseminating promising strategies, practices, and improvement tools to increase access to care and streamline operations.

Disclaimer: *The following redacted resources are from Florida health centers. Their inclusion shouldn't be interpreted as endorsements.*

FQHC-DCF Partnerships Help Patients and Providers

Enabling services are a distinguishing feature of the Health Center Program (HCP) that are designed to help patients overcome barriers to care. Acting as a liaison for connectivity (such as helping identify transportation, income, insurance coverage, and literacy resources), community health centers enable patients to overcome obstacles that prevent target populations from accessing needed health center services. Enrolling patients in health insurance is critical to increasing access to care for them and strengthening health centers' fiscal sustainability. While patients can enroll themselves in Medicaid through Florida's Department of Children and Families (DCF) website and in private insurance through the Health Insurance Marketplace, many don't understand the process, the communication they receive, or what their next steps should be. This results in many eligible patients not securing coverage, which impacts their ability and/or personal investment in seeking appropriate and timely primary care at their local community health center (CHC or FQHC).

Health center enabling staff can help guide patients through this complex system, alleviating the need for them to independently navigate it and helping to ensure the continuity of their care. During a recent FACHC educational session, two Florida health centers that partner with DCF shared details about their workflows, staffing, and technology requirements, as well as how they connect patients with resources to address their social needs, in addition to helping them access health insurance. The partnership mitigates frustration for patients and providers trying to address health needs in the absence of insurance.

Preparing and Supporting Frontline Staff to Manage Difficult Situations

A wide range of unexpected factors can impact the daily operations of a health center, such as behavioral health issues, substance use disorders, domestic violence, staff burnout, or lack of resources – all of which can contribute to disruptive patients and incidences of verbal or physical violence. These scenarios interrupt operations and compound the stress the workforce deals with on a daily basis. Frontline health center staff need skills to manage these difficult scenarios, as well

as clear protocols, policies, and procedures. Through quarterly meetings and shared resources, FACHC has provided ongoing support for a group of forty-two trainers from twenty-one health centers that participated in our Gentle Response Training held in the Spring of 2024. We'll continue to offer additional opportunities for centers to build their capacity in this area and have put together tools and resources that leaders can use to train their staff and consider how to ensure a safe environment for patients, providers, and staff.

Positive Communication in Difficult Circumstances Resources

Staying Abreast of Health Information Technology Opportunities and Challenges

There have been significant strides in Health Information Technology over the past five years that hold promise for increasing access to care, refining operations, and improving health outcomes. The use of telehealth, artificial intelligence (AI), and the practice of remote work have increased significantly. With the promise of technology has come an increase in cybersecurity threats, which put centers at greater financial and legal risk and raise the potential to compromise patient health information. Through FACHC's Operations Roundtables, webinars, newsletters, and other channels, the PCA facilitates the exchange of strategies, practices, and tools to assist centers with their technology needs. What follows are a few examples.

Artificial Intelligence [\(AI\) Consent Statement](#) Templates
Artificial Intelligence [\(AI\) Policies and Procedures](#)
[Employees Accessing Electronic Health Records](#) Policy
Health Information Technology [\(HIT\) Policies](#) Checklist
[Information Blocking](#) Policy

Facilitating Understanding About Operational Metrics

Health Centers frequently seek information from peers or FACHC to better understand their performance compared with other centers of their size or in their region of Florida. FACHC developed a template with operational metrics to facilitate communication and understanding about staffing ratios, productivity, and other measures of operational efficiency. On the Operations Roundtable, we periodically conduct informal polls to shed light on operational issues and put together resources to help centers prepare for their HRSA Operational Site Visits. For more information, please contact FACHC at FACHC@fachc.org.

Collecting and Disseminating Templates, Tools, and Resources

Health centers are always looking for templates and tools to help them improve operations and develop policies and procedures, job descriptions, and other operational documents. FACHC plays a role in seeking input from centers, then compiling and disseminating resources, either in redacted form or with express permission from health centers. This exchange provides centers with new ideas and strategies for consideration, saving them valuable time.

The proliferation of products, services, and platforms that have mushroomed in the FQHC world over the past decade can make it challenging for centers to weed through the noise and determine what will truly help them improve their operations and bottom line. FACHC seeks input from centers related to products, services, partners, and resources, then compiles and disseminates the information, allowing all centers to collectively benefit, rather than individually doing the research. Examples have included, but are not limited to, language interpretation services and call center companies used by the health centers. For more information, please contact FACHC at FACHC@fachc.org.



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