



Taking the Temperature of JaxCareConnect

On October 6, 2022, The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida hosted a Donors Forum, Taking the Temperature of JaxCareConnect, to spotlight a nonprofit healthcare collaborative serving the uninsured in Duval County. The program opened with remarks by Foundation Vice-President Tom Caron, and JaxCareConnect Administrator Jenny O'Donnell then shared an overview of the organization:

- JaxCareConnect is a project of the Duval Safety Net Collaboration started 10 years ago by non-profit healthcare leaders to connect uninsured residents to community health and wellness resources. It serves uninsured adults from 18-64 in Duval County who have incomes of 250% or below Federal Poverty Guidelines.
- Sixty-seven percent of those served by JaxCareConnect make less than \$12,000 a year. Many participants don't qualify for Medicaid due to Florida being one of 12 states that elected not to expand the program. There are an estimated 400,000 Floridians who don't have access to health care.
- JaxCareConnect is entering its third year of a three-year pilot program supported by seven community healthcare organizations – Agape Community Health Center, Inc/Agape Family Health, WestJax Outreach/Community Health Outreach, Muslim American Social Services, Mission House Clinic, Sulzbacher, Volunteers in Medicine, and WeCareJax. The pilot program was funded by the Riverside Hospital Foundation, Baptist Health, The Community Foundation, and the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, as well as the City of Jacksonville.
- In addition to health care, the program assists participants with complex needs that often serve as barriers to effective health and wellness, including job constraints, family/children's care, transportation, technology, and access to healthy nutrition.
- The pilot program is already 42% of the way towards its goal of serving at least 2,000 individuals. The yearly cost savings through patients using JaxCareConnect versus if those same patients had used emergency departments is estimated to be more than \$6 million.

Foundation Vice-President of Programs Kathleen Shaw then introduced three panelists and moderated a discussion on the pilot program and its results.

Highlights from Michael Boylan, Jacksonville City Council Member, Chair of the Northeast Florida Long Term Recovery Organization, and Board Member of Volunteers in Medicine:

- In my work as chair of the council's Special Committee to Address Critical Quality of Life Issues, there are three key areas that we have been studying – health care, homelessness, and affordable housing. The area of access to health care is probably the furthest along of the three, thanks in part to the amazing work that JaxCareConnect has been doing during their pilot program.
- My motivation to support JaxCareConnect comes from my firm belief in the intent of so many organizations to work together to help take some of the burden off the hospital system in addressing the issue of uninsured residents. It is a good reminder of the three-legged stool analogy: that it takes commitment from private organizations,

public entities, and philanthropy to ensure success. JaxCareConnect is a great example of this.

- We at the City of Jacksonville can best help efforts like this by making sure we enact appropriate policy changes to support them and also by continuing our work getting city leaders on board.

Highlights from Melanie Patz, President and CEO of United Way and former Vice-President of Community Investment and Impact of Baptist Health:

- Baptist Hospital is the largest referral source for the JaxCareConnect program, and it is also providing funding for the program. It has been very important that uninsured patients have somewhere to go to get assistance. It took the hospital board's commitment to have a deeper conversation about this collaboration to make the partnership happen.
- The feedback from direct care staff about the program has been overwhelmingly positive. JaxCareConnect has given the individuals operating our area clinics a collective "system approach" that they were lacking in order to be most effective. It also gives direct care staff one central place – one phone number – to refer patients, which saves valuable time and resources.
- Increased funding for the community clinics and organizations that support JaxCareConnect is vital because they need to continue to increase their capacity to provide care as this program becomes more successful. The Florida Association of Free & Charitable Clinics is a great resource.
- If we believe that health care is a right, then we need to make sure we are taking care of people. And that includes making sure everyone has medical care. This will also take more of our physicians stepping up to provide care to the uninsured, through such programs as WeCareJax.

Highlights from Jennie O'Donnell:

- The time frame for our patient care coordination is to reach out to all referrals in approximately two days to screen them and determine their needs. From there, it takes anywhere from two days to two weeks to get an initial appointment with a health care provider.
- In the future, we hope to expand our outreach and our presence in the community. Currently, the majority of our referrals come from hospitals; we are hoping that community referrals will catch up to this more people learn about JaxCareConnect.
- Our staff has learned that navigating the system is a tremendous amount of work and also that our patients often have more complex needs than we anticipated. COVID discouraged many people from seeking preventative care, so incidences of cancer, diabetes, hypertension, and other critical issues have been high. In addition, there are often layered social issues that we help patients navigate through.
- We have trained the discharge team at Baptist, which has greatly helped the effectiveness of the referrals, and we would like to continue to train in other hospitals. One of our future aspirations is also to have a JaxCareConnect Patient Health Advocate in every emergency department in the county.

For more information on how to advocate and/or invest, please visit jaxcareconnect.org or contact Jenny O'Donnell at jodonnell@jaxcareconnect.org.