



Aaron E. Henry Community
Health Services Center, Inc.



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Press Release

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Aaron E. Henry Community Health Services Center to Recruit, Train, and Retain Entry-Level Workers with Support of Major Grant

Health Center Will Educate Local Students about Health Care Careers, Provide Internship Opportunities

Clarksdale, MS – The Aaron E. Henry Community Health Services Center, located in Clarksdale, was awarded a \$199,948 grant as part of a major national initiative to recruit, train, and retain the entry-level employees required by community health centers to deliver high-quality health care.

The grant was announced today by the center and the RCHN Community Health Foundation (RCHN CHF), the only national foundation dedicated solely to supporting community health centers. The foundation's Health Center Entry-Level Workforce Recruitment and Retention Initiative is designed to help the nation's 1,200 community health centers prepare for substantial growth in the next few years. Under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, health centers will play an expanded role in delivering care, and more than thirty million additional Americans, many of whom are expected to seek services at community health centers, will obtain health insurance coverage.

With the foundation's support, the Aaron E. Henry Community Health Services Center will increase recruitment and improve retention of entry-level workers by implementing an educational and mentoring program for students interested in the health professions. The center will join with other nearby health centers to educate middle school and high school students about career opportunities in health care and to provide students in community and four-year colleges with internships and training. Moreover, the center will develop specialized computer- and video-training modules for existing staff and offer training during work hours to enhance skills and job satisfaction.

“Caring for patients is growing more challenging in Mississippi. At the same time that we are seeing more patients with increasingly complex health problems, members of our staff are working more frequently with new technologies, including electronic health records and practice management systems, and dealing with the complexities of major changes in insurance coverage,” said Aurelia Jones-Taylor, Chief Executive Officer of Aaron E. Henry Community Health Services Center. “We are committed to training our staff to excel in this complex and changing environment and deliver high-quality care to the residents of Clarksdale and surrounding communities. To ensure that we have the best workers to meet future need, we will educate students about the growing number of career opportunities in health care in Mississippi.”

“I am delighted that the Aaron. E. Henry Community Health Services Center is furthering its charge of enhancing the quality of health care for the Mississippi Delta, both now and in the future,” said Congressman Bennie Thompson, who represents Mississippi's second congressional district. “The center's plan to recruit, train, and retain entry-level employees will undoubtedly increase the access of our citizens to capable practitioners and increase Mississippi's capacity to effectively handle the growing needs of patients across the state.”

In addition to its grant to the Aaron E. Henry Community Health Services Center, the New York-based RCHN CHF made grants to community health

centers located in four other states: Hawaii, Maine, New York, and Washington. Working with local partners, including vocational programs, community colleges, and veterans groups, each of the centers will develop, implement, and test community-level approaches for ensuring that health centers have enough highly qualified entry-level staff to meet increasing demand. The foundation and the participating health centers will share their findings with health centers across the country, most of which face similar challenges in recruiting and retaining entry-level workers. These staff members, including patient service representatives and medical assistants, work with clinical teams to deliver high-quality, coordinated care focused on the needs of patients, creating comprehensive “medical homes.” Key challenges for community health centers include training entry-level workers to use new electronic management and health record systems, implement new work flows, and appropriately code and bill for services while serving more patients, including an increasing number with complex health problems.

“We believe that the Aaron E. Henry Community Health Services Center will lead the way for other health centers across the country by developing and testing programs to attract and retain a strong workforce,” said Julio Bellber, President and CEO of the RCHN CHF. “This center, which cares for thousands of patients, also plays a crucial role in providing good jobs for entry-level workers, creating economic growth in Clarksdale and other communities.”

“Community health centers are ready to build on their very strong foundations to expand the delivery of comprehensive, high-quality, community-based health care as the new health care law goes into effect,” said Thomas Van Coverden, president and CEO of the National Association of Community Health Centers. “We welcome this initiative and look forward to learning from these local efforts and sharing effective strategies with our health center colleagues from coast to coast.”

About the Aaron E. Henry Community Health Services Center

Founded in 1979 with a heartfelt belief that we are at our best when we serve, Aaron E. Henry Community Health Services Center, Inc. starts every day with a mission to matter. We are a federally qualified community health center serving

five rural counties from multiple sites in the heart of the Mississippi Delta. In the eyes, the hearts, and the hopes of our communities, we see our purpose. And in that purpose, we find the strength to make a difference every day. Like our namesake, we are, first and foremost, agents of change and revival in our communities. As we reach out, we move forward. Visit our website at www.aehcommunityhealth.org to learn about our services.

About the RCHN Community Health Foundation

The RCHN Community Health Foundation, founded in October 2005, is a not-for-profit operating foundation whose mission is to support community health centers through strategic investment, outreach, education, and cutting-edge health policy research. The only foundation in the country dedicated solely to community health centers, RCHN CHF builds on health centers' forty-year commitment to the provision of accessible, high-quality, community-based health care services for underserved and medically vulnerable populations. For more information on RCHN CHF, visit www.rchnfoundation.org.