

MEASURING IMPACT



MILE HIGH HEALTH ALLIANCE

Center for Health Progress partners with community leaders and residents to support community-driven health systems change. One tactic we have used to operationalize this strategy is to directly support local collective impact strategies focused on transforming the health system. We have contributed to the development of multiple health alliances across the state and new collaborative leadership in communities, and we are proud of the progress of one in particular: the Mile High Health Alliance (MHHA).

MHHA initially formed out of the Denver community health improvement plan process. A strategy identified in the plan was to create a health alliance, or a permanent collaborative of important health care-related stakeholder organizations, in Denver. This idea was based on the mutual understanding across local organizations that Denver has a strong health care infrastructure, but needed major improvements in a few areas to meet the needs of all residents. A few examples of concerns were: residents did not

have adequate access to primary and specialty care (especially those who are uninsured and underinsured), some residents remain uninsured even after the full implementation of the Affordable Care Act, and barriers in the system prevented integration of care and caring for the whole person. As these issues are difficult for any one agency to tackle on its own, collaboration across health care organizations was identified as key in implementing solutions for the whole county.

However, the culture surrounding health care in Denver did not allow for robust collaboration due to historic mistrust and competition.

Based on our expertise in collective impact initiatives and our ability to act as neutral convener, Center for Health Progress was recruited as the lead facilitator in the process. Our structured approach included the following steps:

1. Conduct one-on-one meetings with community leaders to



understand the current environmental context, individual aspirations for change, and power dynamics.

2. As a group, take stock in and develop key focus areas around Denver's top health care assets and challenges.
3. Envision what an ideal world would look like in each focus area, and create goals that will get the community to the vision.
4. Develop and choose immediate and winnable strategies within each goal.
5. Establish governance structures

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to ensure follow-through and inclusivity.

6. Collectively create an exit strategy for Center for Health Progress and transfer leadership.

This process was effective in driving communities toward collaboration because it focuses on identification of common pain points, a shared understanding of the data and problems, and building relationships and trust.

These convenings led to the formal creation of MHHA, a membership alliance of major health care organizations in Denver, including major hospitals, public health, human services, safety net clinics, and community based organizations. Along the way, Center for Health Progress and our local partners have noted the



*The Mile High Health Alliance was born out of **dreams to improve the health of all who live in Denver**. The conversations among the group were deep and meaningful. Staff from Center for Health Progress were expert in **facilitating the group to move toward the creation of the alliance**.*

DR. CARL CLARK

President and CEO, Mental Health Center of Denver

dramatic cultural shift in the way health care organizations in Denver County are approaching local health systems change.

Center for Health Progress's involvement made collaboration possible, by encouraging organizations to look past pre-existing tensions toward the bigger vision of maximizing the resources within Denver for its residents. This has allowed for collaborative progress on intermediate outcomes such as increased enrollment of Denver residents in health insurance, the exploration of a specialty care referral network, and more coordinated high-utilizer interventions in the county.

Center for Health Progress will continue to support the work of MHHA as it transitions into its own independent alliance, and we anticipate the group's strategies

will lead to increased health insurance coverage and a more responsive health system in Denver.

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