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More Health Services for the Uninsured: St. Mary's Dining Room Expands Partnership with Community Medical Centers

OVERVIEW: St. Mary's Dining Room is partnering with Community Medical Centers to operate its Virgil Gianelli Medical Clinic on a full-time basis. This will increase capacity, expand hours and services, and provide integrated behavioral health services for the uninsured and underinsured.

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PHOTO: Sandra Garcia, MA, and Alberto Sandoval, NP, from Community Medical Centers (CMC), provide medical care to the uninsured and underinsured at the Virgil Gianelli Medical Clinic at St. Mary's Dining Room. CMC will begin operating the clinic full-time in November.

STOCKTON, Cal., Oct. 18, 2022 – St. Mary's Dining Room, one of the city's most comprehensive social service nonprofits, is enhancing its medical clinic through an expanded, full-service partnership with Community Medical Centers (CMC). Beginning Nov. 1, CMC, which has been staffing St. Mary's Virgil Gianelli Medical Clinic three days a week for the past two years, will become the full-time service provider for the clinic, increasing capacity and expanding services for uninsured and underinsured residents of San Joaquin County.

St. Mary's Dining Room, most widely recognized for serving three hot meals to more than 500 guests daily, has been providing free medical care since its inception more than sixty-five years ago. In addition to the medical clinic, the agency provides dental care through the St. Raphael's Dental Clinic, established in 1995. The dental clinic will remain staffed by volunteer dentists.

"Our guests' inability to pay for health insurance and out-of-pocket expenses often results in untreated illness and injury affecting an individual's overall well-being and creating barriers in their efforts to live more stable and enriched lives," said Petra Linden, CEO of St. Mary's Dining Room, who has had a robust 30-year career in public health administration. "Health care is an essential service to our clients, who will benefit significantly from this expanded partnership."

"These are two historic and transformational nonprofits that are aligned through their mission and their commitment to quality service for marginalized populations with the greatest needs in our community," said Dr. Anitra Williams, DNP, vice president and chief nursing officer at St. Joseph's Medical Center, who serves on St. Mary's board of directors. St. Joseph's Medical Center has been a long-time supporter of the clinic and will continue to partner.

In the new operations model, CMC will provide personnel that will enable the medical clinic to be open five days a week by early 2023. In addition to expanded capacity, the CMC-operated clinic will provide full-scope primary care services, including preventive care, which will be integrated with behavior health services, including substance use treatment and mental health treatment.

While services at the clinic have always been free, payment for referral appointments have often been the patients' responsibility, and medications have been limited. CMC, which operates as a federally qualified health center, receives government subsidies, which has allowed them to expand services in recent years. In addition, changes to Medi-Cal, California's Medicaid program for low-income individuals and families, have expanded its pool of qualified applicants. CMC brings a wealth of experience with Medi-Cal, which will help clinic patients navigate the application process, and in turn, provide more people with access to specialists, inpatient hospital care, and a broader range of medications free of charge.

"CMC is a nationally recognized health organization that has been providing life-saving and life-changing medical care to our community for nearly half a century," Williams said. "The organization brings staff, resources and opportunities that will expand care and capacity at our clinic for a broader number of people in need of quality health care, regardless of their ability to pay."

Christine Noguera, CEO of Community Medical Centers, said, "Over the last couple years, as we have been building our partnership with St. Mary's, we have witnessed the dedication and commitment of staff and volunteers to serve all who visit the clinic. We are honored and excited to expand our role as both organizations work to improve the lives of the underserved in our community."

Prior to the partnership with CMC, the medical clinic at St. Mary's relied on volunteer medical professionals to provide essential care to thousands who have used the clinic over the past six decades.

"This clinic has been a lifeline for many who have had nowhere else to go for care," said Linden. "That critical work could not have happened without the expertise and commitment of Dr. Barbara Rankin and the extraordinary team of volunteer medical professionals. Their dedication and compassion built the foundation that has enabled us to now expand our services and capabilities to bring even more care to our patients."

"It takes a village to care for the unserved, and we couldn't have done this without the thousands of volunteer hours provided by our many caring healthcare professionals. We've had a great run," said Rankin, who has served as the clinic's volunteer medical director.

[St. Mary's Dining Hall](#): Since 1955, St. Mary's Dining Hall has been responding to poverty in San Joaquin County by feeding the hungry, caring for health issues and restoring dignity to more than 500 individuals each day. The dining hall serves three meals a day, and a social services team provides case management and housing navigation services. A health clinic and a dental clinic provide care for the uninsured and underinsured. The campus also provides shower facilities and a clothing closet. Partner organizations, such as Child Abuse Prevention Council, and staff from resource agencies such as Loads of Love, as well as case managers and behavioral health specialists are also housed on campus.

[Community Health Centers](#): Launched in the late 1960s, Community Health Centers is a nonprofit network of 900 health care professionals who serve more than 100,000 patients in San Joaquin, Solano and Yolo Counties at more than 27 sites. In 2021, CMC received the annual Quality Improvement Awards from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in recognition for the quality of care it provides to patients.