

Looking to 2023 for SMC

Telehealth Needs: \$30,000.00

Due to the scarcity of some specialty care physicians at Tidelands Health getting specialty appointments for some of our patients is somewhat challenging. Although MUSC is willing to see patients it is difficult for them to get to the appointments in Mt. Pleasant or Charleston.

With an eye towards Telehealth, this year the clinic purchased new computers, updated the firewall, internet speed and network server- At a cost of around \$40,000.00. (complete)

The Second phase is getting the clinic volunteers more comfortable utilizing the Electronic Medical Records system in place (ECW) as that will be the way to send charts/communicate with the Telehealth providers. (Training in progress)

2023 - We will need to purchase the platform, provide a private space with medical equipment, computer hooked up to large monitor with audio-visual ability, hire and train an on-site/in room nurse for the visit. (Research to begin January 2023)

Behavioral Health: \$90,000.00

The need for counselors is overwhelming throughout the state, but especially true in Georgetown County [Tidelands Health Community Needs Assessment (CHNA) 2022 – 1,060 residents to 1 mental health provider: 19.1% depression diagnosis in Georgetown County]

The optimal answer would be a Mental Health professional on site, but we have not been able to get enough volunteers to serve the need here nor do we have the funding to hire one. (Average between \$30 and \$35/hr.) The demographic of the patients at Smith (all free clinics) predisposes them to depression and anxiety given their circumstances.

***Crossover with need #1** It is our hope, with some information from Board Member, Ashley McCray (social worker) there are Telehealth Platforms which serve not just physical health appointments but also Mental/Emotional Health needs by facilitating sessions here at the clinic on the platform.

Patient Navigator/Care Coordinator: \$45,000.00

This role would function as resource guide for non-medical assistance SMC patients need help with. The care coordinator would be expected to help patient identify the resources for patient needs and provide them with contact information and on some occasions may have to assist patients with making the initial contact to the resources they need. The Patient Navigator/Care Coordinator would also encompass offsite referral coordination and management.

Perhaps recruitment through the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act program for this role could be a cost effective first step. The WIOA offers both paid work internship opportunities as well as On-the-Job Training opportunities. This would provide SMC with someone to fill the role without having to budget paying them ourselves until after 400 hours complete, enabling us to assure they are a good fit.

Many of the most vulnerable patients have difficulty accessing and navigating complexities of the healthcare system. A patient navigator or referral/care coordinator can facilitate and improve healthcare with advocacy and coordination. They also could address deep rooted issues related to the distrust of providers in the healthcare system which leads to noncompliance and avoidance. Psychiatrist George Ingle in 1977 wrote "The medical model must consider the patient and the social context in which he lives. Health outcomes are significantly influenced by the complex systems of socioeconomic status, education, job opportunities and social support mechanisms". Unfortunately, this is still true today. I believe this role can be critical in helping our patients, by spending extra time to facilitate communications between providers and patients; in essence being a bridge between two worlds helping the patient with appointments, ancillary care, patient education, translation, and transportation.

Georgetown Clinic Growth: \$85,000.00

We have secured the funds for 2022 to provide primary care clinics 4 days a week, as well as Thursday Evening clinic. (This is up from 2 days of primary care per week in 2021) We have historically had difficulty finding volunteers willing to work at the GTN location, so we have hired a Nurse Practitioner to fill the gap. First quarter 2023 we will be tracking and reporting on number of visits, new patients, cancellations, and no shows (compared to PI clinic numbers [2023] and GTN numbers [last year] to demonstrate need/and success of the additional days. Then we will craft a plan for what comes next, first steps being assuring enough nursing staff, and researching a non-dispensing pharmacy on site down there.

Access to care here in Georgetown County was the number one issue identified in the Tideland CHNA report in 2022

1,556:1 Primary care physician to patient ratio, and Georgetown County deaths due to Heart Disease, cancer and stroke are higher than expected with a higher premature death rate than the average in SC.