CASE STUDY

CHC Leverages Community Outreach Model to Acquire New Patients and Close Gaps in Care

CHC Community Health Centers

Community Health Centers of the Central Coast (CHC) is a non-profit network of community health centers serving the residents of California's Central Coast. Located in San Luis Obispo and Northern Santa Barbara Counties, CHC provides comprehensive medical, dental, behavioral health, health education, chiropractic, and preventive services, particularly to the medically underserved.

- 31 clinics
- 150,000 patients
- 450,000+ annual visits
- EHR: Athena

Serving the Underserved

As a Federally Qualified Health Center and 'safety net' provider, CHC's patient population includes low-income, uninsured community members with particular emphasis on special populations such as homeless, school-based, migrant and seasonal farm workers, and public housing residents.

Serving over 150,000 patients and spanning a 100-mile radius, CHC is the largest Medicaid provider in the two counties they cover. In alignment with their Managed Care Organization (MCO) and the State of California, their primary goal is to "get every newly assigned life to CHC as their provider" and to see a primary care physician within the first 90 days they are assigned. Since many of these patients may be using temporary cell phones, are homeless, or no longer have a working phone number, this can be a challenge.

With an unwavering commitment to delivering high-quality health care to all residents, regardless of income level or socioeconomic status, CHC has constructed a best-in-class ecosystem of technology partners to open up new communication pathways and connect patients conveniently to care. Artera is a main component of this and is "really helping CHC bring cutting-edge technology to our patients" – a main priority for the organization, according to Frederick Aguilera, Navigation Center Supervisor at CHC.

The Results

30% recruitment rate within one year

20K appointments scheduled for recruited patients in one year

60% connected patient rate

99% of responses are sent to patients within one hour

5 to 1 reduction for FTE count for outbound calls

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"It's really important for us to deliver a world-class experience to our patients. Regardless of socioeconomic status or income level, we want them to know they can access high-quality health care just like everyone else. We're delivering state-of-the-art health care and facilities, and we should be able to match that up with advanced technology when it comes to patient communications," Aguilera said. "That's why we partner with Artera."

Start Off Small and Grow from There

Before using Artera, CHC had five dedicated outbound FTEs to cold call their Medicaid population. When they found Artera, they decided to tap into the platform largely as a campaign outreach tool to recruit and retain patients by pushing out text messages. Outside of the initial "welcome" message to patients, messages cover everything from annual check-ups to dental exams, cancer screenings, and more. This new approach not only allowed "patients to reply in their own time and at their own convenience" but allowed CHC to shift their staff around to just one outbound FTE and two inbound FTEs.

While implementing a new solution seemed daunting at first, CHC started off small by piloting at a few clinics and expanding later on. "We were so delightfully surprised that the impact to staff workload was so minimal," said Aguilera. For outreach specifically, "the great thing is that you get to dictate how - and when - the message volume goes out and how you're going to be able to support those campaigns." It's all about understanding and tailoring to the volume your organization can handle, he suggests.

Community Outreach Model Successfully Recruits Patients into CHC

Known as the Community Outreach Model, this outreach approach to new patients - or those who haven't been seen in 12 months - has seen tremendous success at CHC. In one year (June 2022 - June 2023), they had a recruitment rate of 30 percent, meaning 30 percent of patients who were reached out to made - and kept - an appointment. CHC ultimately scheduled ~20,000 appointments for recruited patients within the last year.



"The success of the recruitment rate is tied to connecting patients to care – at the end of the day, we want to get them in, get them established, and we want them to know that they have a patient-centered medical home with us," said Aguilera. By successfully recruiting patients, they are "exposing them to services and connecting them to care," helping to significantly close care gaps in their community.

By using Artera Analytics and reporting, CHC can show their patient outreach efforts and contact attempts to their MCO, which has been a "really big win" for them in terms of documenting just how many patients they truly are connecting with. They're also using analytics to demonstrate the value of Artera to their leadership team, sharing insights into campaign numbers, response rates, and more.

Conversational Messaging Helps to Eliminate Staff Burnout

While CHC's journey with Artera specifically started off with Community Outreach, Aguilera soon realized they were not using the platform to its full capacity. Since they were struggling with high call volume in their Navigation Center, he suggested they use Artera to encourage patients to text the enterprise number for appointments – something that could help reduce long wait times and abandoned calls.

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Navigation Center Supervisor

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By enabling conversational messaging, patients have now been texting in to schedule and reschedule appointments or ask questions. Not only has this been more convenient for patients but it's also helped eliminate staff burnout – something that can happen "very quickly" in a busy call center. According to Aguilera, they're even using Artera as an incentive or "re-engagement tool" to respond to employee burnout, allowing staff to cross over from the phones to the Artera platform to "restimulate and reignite them."

CHC call center staff set a high bar for themselves. In fact, leadership runs appointment productivity numbers with set goals for each staff member: schedule a minimum of 35 appointments per day and respond to every single patient that texts in within one hour. "We want it to be instantaneous as much as possible," said Aguilera. They're hitting that goal, too, with less than one percent of responses coming after one hour.

It's All About Connection

It's clear that CHC is passionate about making sure their patients feel heard and have a world-class healthcare experience. A big part of that is ushering in more communication channels to make sure their patients can access care as seamlessly as possible. It also includes monitoring their patient communications data on an ongoing basis in order to evaluate what's working and what isn't. The CHC team tracks inbound and outbound SMS message volume over time and their deliverability rate for broadcast messages (approximately 98 percent), among other key metrics. As a result, CHC can optimize their patient messaging in order to ultimately improve the patient experience.

As they continue to move further along their journey with Artera, they are interested in diving deeper into the platform, exploring new features and functionalities: "We are always looking to push the boundaries of what's next with Artera," said Aguilera.

In the meantime, they are continuously building connected patient experiences – so much so, that they won Artera's Heartie Award for Community Health Center of the Year. With a 60 percent connected patient rate, CHC is absolutely committed to establishing deeper relationships with their patients. "That's what we're really trying to do: bring heart to everything we do," said Aguilera. "It made us proud to know that what we're trying to do for our patients is being recognized."

> ***"The Artera platform has helped us mitigate employee burnout. Staff can now cross over from the phones to the Artera platform to restimulate and reignite them."***
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> **Frederick Aguilera**
> Navigation Center Supervisor

Partnership Snapshot

Deployed Community Outreach Model to reach new patients

Reduced staff burnout by introducing new, easy-to-use tool for patient communications

Harnessed Artera's analytics to optimize patient engagement

Deepened connectivity with patients and improved their experience



2023 Heartie Winner: Community Health Centers of the Central Coast

Community Health Center of the Year

The Heartie Awards recognize Artera's top customers facilitating connected patient experiences. The awards are given out each year at Artera's Heartbeat customer conference.

Artera's Connected Patient Rate* calculates the percentage of the total number of reached patients that are "Connected," meaning they engaged in a meaningful dialogue with their healthcare provider over the past year.

*Methodology developed by the Artera Data & Insights Team.

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