

Resource Connect: Whole Child Health Starts Here

2021-2022 Report



Addressing the Health and Social Needs of Children and Families

Resource Connect at Children's Hospital Colorado is one of the few pediatric programs of its kind in the country to robustly address social determinants of health (SDoH) by connecting families in a clinical healthcare setting to the social services they need. Medical care in a clinical setting accounts for only 20% of what influences kids' overall health and health outcomes. The majority of children's health is impacted by social determinants of health, which include things like:

- Neighborhood and built environments, such as housing, transportation, playgrounds and air guality
- Economic factors, such as employment, income and access to foods
- · Social and community context and culture, such as civic engagement, discrimination and racism
- · Education, such as level of schooling, literacy, language fluency and early childhood education

All patients and families seen at the Children's Colorado Health Pavilion are eligible to receive Resource Connect services. Patients and families seen by medical providers, dentists and mental health therapists at the Health Pavilion can be either screened for eight resource needs or referred to Resource Connect by a social worker or a community health navigator. Within Resource Connect there's a network of community health navigators and partners who are ready to provide wraparound care and support. This is all accomplished through robust partnerships between Children's Hospital Colorado and community-based organizations. Patients and families can access Resource Connect the same day and in the same building after their clinic visit.

Resource Connect anchors Children's Colorado's strategy for population health: delivering healthcare that lasts beyond a clinic visit and enhances care for patients and families by creating a centralized place to access their most common social needs. Since opening in 2019, more than 4,500 families have been referred to

Resource Connect, helping to realize Children's Colorado's vision and contribution to an ongoing, nationwide shift towards wholechild health.

Child Health Clinic patient Jade, 16 months old, and he

other, Xochit

Donors have helped make all of this possible. Resource Connect could not have been launched without significant investments from our supporters, since insurance does not cover any of the services the program provides. With help from our community, Children's Colorado is demonstrating that this innovative model of whole-child care can create better outcomes for kids and families, ultimately at a lower long-term cost.



The Path to Whole-child Health

Well-child Visit

As a toddler, Mateo comes to the Child Health Clinic at the Child Health Pavilion for a well-child visit with his mom and attends his car seat appointment. There, his mom completes a universal psychosocial screening tool, which includes eight resource needs questions. Mateo's family screens "positive" for food, energy and benefits, such as Medicaid, meaning they need assistance in accessing these resources.



Community Health Navigator Referral

Mateo and his mom meet with a community health navigator (CHN), who works with the family to understand their needs, and the CHN refers the family to Resource Connect, located in the same building where they are — and open for same-day appointments.

Health Coverage, Nutrition and Energy Assistance At Resource Connect, Mateo's mom receives help applying for and getting

enrolled in Medicaid; assistance with a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application for the family; and support from Energy Outreach Colorado, where the family qualifies for the Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP), which helps make their home's energy more affordable.

Healthy Roots Food Clinic

From there, with a prescription to the Healthy Roots Food Clinic (HRFC), Mateo's mom picks up food from a menu of items of their choice that meets their family's taste and nutritional needs. Based on the principle of Food as Medicine and the belief that hunger is a health issue, the HRFC provides nutritious food - including some fresh produce sourced from Children's Colorado's very own Healthy Roots Garden; guidance on community resources and basic nutrition; and safe food education support.

Building the Sustainability Plan

Mateo and his family's experience informs how Children's Colorado scales, spreads and continues to build the case for our model to address social determinants of health and gather outcomes data so these services and supports can eventually be reimbursable through insurance.

Food Clinic at Crawford **Elementary School**

As Mateo grows, his family accesses the new food clinic at his school, which was launched in partnership with Children's Colorado.

"Having multiple resources in one place are so important for families with transportation issues; the ability to accomplish multiple things at one location is extremely valuable, especially for refugee and immigrant families who are learning a new city. Once a client has a good relationship, they know who to call, and they can count on them to help find other resources."

JACLYN, ARAPAHOE COUNTY NUTRITION OF WOMEN, INFANTS, CHILDREN (WIC)

Connecting families to resources: Referrals at a glance

Between 2021 and 2022, Resource Connect provided services and support to 2,620 patients. Most families were referred to Healthy Roots Food Clinic (1,783 patients), followed by the Benefits Eligibility Technician (789 patients), Medical Legal Partnership (376 patients) and housing navigation (350 patients). A full list of patients seen by partner is show below.

	# unique patients
Healthy Roots Food Clinic	1,783
Public benefits	789
Colorado Medical Legal Partnership	376
Housing	350
Energy Outreach Colorado	278
WIC	239
A Precious Child	16
Adams County Workforce	15
Education ¹	<10

Many families were referred to multiple partners in Resource Connect. Around two in every three patients referred to Resource Connect were referred to two or more partners (67.4% of referrals). Approximately 183 referrals were made each month during this time, or about nine referrals a day.

Families referred to Resource Connect had rich and diverse backgrounds. The median age of patients referred was 3 years old. Around 70.1% of patients had English as their preferred healthcare language, 23.8% Spanish, and 6.1% had a non-English and non-Spanish preferred healthcare language. Nine in 10 patients (90.0%) were using Medicaid as their primary insurance, followed by private insurance (5.8%) and self-pay (2.1%) or other insurance coverage (2.1%). A plurality of patients identified as Hispanic or Latino (any race), followed by non-Hispanic or Latino Black or African American (21.3%) and non-Hispanic or Latino white (8.6%).

Overall 65% of referrals to Resource Connect were successful. In a recent research paper on Resource Connect, patients with a preferred healthcare language of Spanish or non-English, non-Spanish had a statistically significantly higher success rate compared to English. For more information on the research paper, visit <u>Assessing Strengths, Challenges, and Equity via Pragmatic Evaluation of a Social Care Program - Academic Pediatrics (academicpedsjnl.net).</u>



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Screening and navigation



Screening

Most of the referrals to CHNs and Resource Connect are identified by a provider in the primary care clinics at the Children's Colorado Health Pavilion, Aurora using a psychosocial screener. The eightquestion screener assesses a variety of social needs, such as barriers to public benefits, food access, housing, finances, education and other social and mental health-related needs. Patients can also be identified by any other provider in the Health Pavilion, a social worker, through a member of the navigation team, or they can self-refer to Resource Connect.

During 2021 and 2022, navigators served more the 7,652 unique patients whose most common resource needs were food, financial support, public benefits, and connecting caregivers to a primary care provider.

Psychosocial positive screening, by screener item, 2021–2022

Positive Screener Items	% Positive Screens of Total Screens by Year		
	2021	2022	
Making ends meet	7.6%	6.7%	
Public benefits	6.2%	5.2%	
Food insecurity	6.1%	5.7%	
Housing	2.8%	2.7%	

"One of our roles is to advocate for all the structures and the interconnected pieces of children's health — we can't build affordable housing and cannot change the price of food, but we contribute in the ways that invest in the change that moves away from the 'return on investment' into the bolder idea of children's health."

LISA DECAMP, MD, MEDICAL DIRECTOR, RESOURCE CONNECT



Navigation

When a patient or family present with a social need and they are interested in assistance, they are connected to a community health navigator (CHN). The CHN plays a critical role, working closely with patients and families to reduce barriers that keep them from achieving optimal health. Barriers may be related to transportation, childcare, language, or ability to effectively navigate the health care system.

Children's Colorado has a team of eight CHN; six are based in clinics and two in Resource Connect. They provide the bridge between the healthcare system and community resources that address social needs. They also serve as a liaison between patient families and Resource Connect partners to facilitate a seamless referral - the epitome of a warm handoff - to ensure families receive the resources needed to reduce barriers and improve health outcomes.

JULIE BEAUBIAN, MANAGER, RESOURCE CONNECT



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"The community health navigator plays an important role in the health care continuum. Bringing a wealth of experience and knowledge to both the health care team and families to address barriers that impact health."





An update on our partners and services



Healthy Roots Food Clinic

The Healthy Roots Food Clinic is based on the principle of food as medicine and the belief that hunger is a health issue. To promote and support the health of patients and their families, the Healthy Roots Food Clinic provides nutritious food, guidance on community resources and basic nutrition, and safe food education support to the Children's Colorado Health Pavilion patients and their families.

In October 2019, the Healthy Roots Food Clinic was launched in Resource Connect. It is the first pediatric food clinic in the Rocky Mountain region. At Healthy Roots Food Clinic, families can stock up on healthy and nutritious foods at no extra cost, including shelf-stable staples such as beans and grains, meat and dairy products, and fresh produce — some of which is sourced from the hospital's very own Healthy Roots Garden located on the Anschutz Medical Campus. Families can also receive nutrition advice and cooking lessons.

To ensure that the families who visit the food clinic can use the food they receive, the clinic stocks foods that are culturally responsive, they support families in learning about new foods and how to prepare them, they ensure that the food distributed is healthy and has high nutritional value, and they provide the food "with dignity" by presenting options so the patients get decide what to take home.

In 2021-2022, the Healthy Roots Food Clinic received 1,783 referrals from primary care providers in Children's Colorado's Health Pavilion and served 12,302 people (5,983 children and 6,319 adults), through 2,516 visits; the estimated financial value of this is more than \$800,000.

During the summer of 2021, Resource Connect launched a pilot of the Healthy Roots Food Clinic in Crawford Elementary and Aurora Central High School, in the Aurora Public Schools (APS) District. The students in these schools come from 50+ different countries, speak over 150 languages, and 82% qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch. In 2021 and 2022, 3,420 APS student households were reached through these school-based clinics, serving more than 10,000 unique individuals.

"One of the things I am most proud of? The partnership with Aurora Public Schools! Before [the pilot] our partnership was just a transactional referral process. But the school-based food clinics, we built this together. We built something to end food in security using resources they already had at the schools and integrated the Food as Medicine model."

EVE KUTCHMAN, MANAGER, HEALTHY ROOTS FOOD CLINIC



Healthy Roots Garden

In the summertime, the Healthy Roots Garden provides fresh produce for the food clinic. The 3,000-square-foot garden is used to cultivate over 40 varieties of fruits and vegetables and is run by a full-time urban gardener and hospital volunteers. The garden is often visited by in-patient clinicians and patients for therapeutic purposes.

2.451 pounds.



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In 2021, the garden produced 1,308 pounds of produce and in 2022, the garden produced



Denver Human Services eligibility technician

Denver Human Services envisions a healthy community where people are connected, supported, safe and well.

The public benefits eligibility technician helps children, older adults, families, and individuals with applying for Health First Colorado (Colorado Medicaid), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in Denver, Arapahoe and Adams counties. The Benefits Technician assists families with completing and submitting applications to the statewide benefit system. During 2021 and 2022, the benefits technician received 940 referrals, primarily focused on SNAP, Medicaid and TANF.

	2021	2022	Totals
# of referrals	569	371	940
# of children served	1,124	716	1840
Total SNAP benefits issued*	\$174,266	\$136,322	\$310,588

"At Resource Connect, I can build relationships with my clients. They feel comfortable calling with any question or if there are any changes they need to report. They are more comfortable with reporting changes because they know it will be addressed, because I am just a phone call away."

BREANNA, DHS ELIGIBILITY TECHNICIAN

Arapahoe County Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, Children (WIC)

The mission of WIC is to safeguard the health of low-income women, infants and children up to age 5 who are at nutrition risk.

Staffed by dietitians from the Tri-County Health Department, WIC provides critical nutritional support to pregnant women, breastfeeding women, postpartum women and children under the age of 5 years. WIC services include enrollment, re-enrollment and breast pump distribution. WIC assists families with nutrition education, access to healthy foods, breastfeeding support and referrals to community organizations. Unique to the Resource Connect partnership, WIC staff have access to EPIC, Children Colorado's electronic health record, where they can check height, weight, iron levels and other nutritional indicators as they work with shared patients.

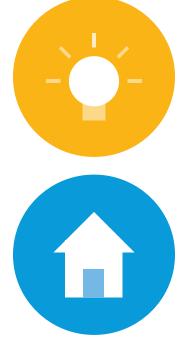
In 2021 and 2022, there were 239 families who were referred to WIC through Resource Connect.

"We are reaching more clients that wouldn't have joined WIC otherwise because of having to take extra steps to call another phone number and take time off work to go to another appointment. We are reaching the population that needs the services but doesn't have the time and resources to take advantage of it."

WIC NUTRITION MANAGER







Energy Outreach Colorado (EOC)

Energy Outreach Colorado leads a network of industry, state and local partners to support, stabilize and sustain Coloradans to afford their energy needs. Through Resource Connect, EOC provides the opportunity for families to access emergency bill payment assistance, Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) support and home weatherization assistance. During 2021 and 2022, Energy Outreach Colorado supported 278 families who were referred for past due bills, LEAP applications and the Colorado's Affordable Residential Energy (CARE) Program. EOC provided more than \$35,000 in assistance to patients and families.

Housing Navigation

As a fundamental health and social need, housing instability and homelessness can have negative effects on child health outcomes. A child living in temporary or uncertain conditions can experience other negative social determinants of health.

Given that housing security is a need among Resource Connect families, a specialized Resource Connect housing navigator works to build partnerships with community organizations who can connect families to a variety of services, including emergency housing, moving or relocation assistance, eviction prevention, access to low-income housing, rental assistances and housing vouchers.

During 2021 and 2022, 350 families were referred to Resource Connect for housing navigation.

"In these economic times, providing housing assistance to clients and answering their general questions is a complex process, but with Resource Connect, I am able to establish relationships with them to ensure their success."

KIM ALLADICE, HOUSING NAVIGATOR, RESOURCE CONNECT



The mission of the Colorado Medical-Legal Partnership is to provide better health and welfare outcomes for children and their families served by Children's Hospital Colorado through meaningful access to legal services and social advocacy, for free.

CMLP assists families with legal issues that impact child health. These legal issues range from adult guardianship to housing concerns to educational issues and beyond. In addition, CMLP has partners in the legal community to refer employment, discrimination, eviction, immigration, and trust and estates matters.

individual rights.

"We worked with a young mom whose baby had surgery right after it was born. The hospital sent the baby home with an oxygen tank, which the baby didn't end up using. While the mom was working two jobs and raising a child with medical complications, returning the oxygen tank was not on her radar. One day, a collection notice from the oxygen tank company for \$5000 showed up in her mailbox. She had no idea what it meant and was very afraid. She came into the CMLP asking for help and we got to work. We helped her connect with and negotiate with the medical supply company. Ultimately, the entire bill was forgiven."

JULIE SELSBERG, ATTORNEY, CMLP

Colorado Medical Legal Partnership (CMLP)

In 2021 and 2022, CMLP worked with 376 families, primarily focused on housing, family and



A Precious Child

A Precious Child assists children and families facing difficult life challenges such as abuse and neglect, crisis situations and poverty. They provide cradle-to-career support to break the cycle of poverty by reducing socioeconomic inequalities, and connecting participants with needed resources, services, opportunities and educational support. A Precious Child joined Resource Connect as a new partner in 2022.

In its first year (2022), there were 16 referrals to A Precious Child for a variety of family needs, including: clothing, baby equipment, prenatal clothing, school supplies, and more.

"I was working with a young family that needed a lot of baby supplies. Because of their transportation needs, they could not go way up to A Precious Child (located in Broomfield, CO), but I knew that we could request certain items through Resource Connect. I worked with the Community Health Navigator to make a list and then someone from the team went to pick it all up. The family got a stroller, a big bag of clothes for baby, and some clothes for mom. The mom was thrilled! It felt so good to work together as a team making sure the families get what they need."

ANGELA TURBYFILL, SOCIAL WORKER, YOUNG MOM'S CLINIC



Adams County Workforce & Business Center

Also a new Resource Connect partner in 2022, the Adams County Workforce & Business Center provides a variety of helpful resources, such as: unemployment benefits registration, job search help for the unemployed, support for those seeking to improve current employment situations, resume development, notifications about job or opportunity fairs and commercial driver's license information. Additionally, all clients can be referred to the physical Workforce & Business Center to use computers, the fax, and meet face-to-face with a county representative.

Taking a two-generational approach, the Workforce Center believes that accessible employment resources are critical to the mental and physical health of families and children.

In addition to services most often utilized by adults, youth ages 14-24 can also participate in the Workforce Center's youth program. The youth program pays for a GED, provides work-based learning opportunities where their salary is paid for by the Center while they are learning important employment skills.

In 2022, there were 15 referrals from Resource Connect to the Workforce & Business Center.

"A positive experience in working with resource connect is we can really come together and provide wrap around services. We determine all the needs and provide the supports right then and there. Someone does housing, eligibility, workforce, etc. It's like a Venn diagram - all the orgs that are separate entities coming together to help people."

RAYNA, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & BUSINESS CENTER

Family story

Through a big, dimpled smile, Manuel proudly shares that he is the smallest in his family of four siblings, and he has a new dog named "Buddy." He is bright and inquisitive and has been a patient at Children's Hospital Colorado since his birth five years ago.

As immigrants to the United States, Manuel's parents had to learn to navigate complex medical and social systems to receive the special care needed for their son, to pay for the basic needs of their family on low-wage earnings, all in a new language. Often this meant they had to prioritize paying rent over getting their children Christmas presents, or they struggled to find the transportation to get to medical appointments. There were times when they were not sure where the next meal would come from.

Manuel's mom, Maria, shared how things started to change for them, thanks to Resource Connect. "Manuel was 5 months old; we didn't have much. It was wintertime. I wasn't working and Jonathan's father didn't have much income. We had nothing to give the children for Christmas. I was at a medical appointment with Manuel, and I told the community health navigator about our difficulties. Before I knew it, they had signed us up to be adopted by a family who gave us gifts. So many gifts! They brought things we really needed for Jonathan – a highchair, diapers, clothing. They even gave some presents to my older children. It helped so much. They made our Christmas so happy."

After realizing that this kind of support was available through a medical provider they could trust, Maria felt more comfortable asking for the help they needed to survive. The team at Resource Connect helped her submit her paperwork to sign up for Medicaid; when Manuel was still under a year old and transportation was difficult to find, the team helped Maria with getting Medicaid reimbursement for taxis; when they fell behind on the payments for their electric bill, they qualified for LEAP and were able to get some assistance; and when the family was facing food insecurity, they received food from the Healthy Roots Clinic and were taught how to access other community-based food resources when needed.

Helping families like Manuel's is the reason Resource Connect exists. While Manuel s family doesn't feel the need to ask for as much assistance as they used to, they trust that Children's is here for them. Maria shared "...as far as I am concerned, Manuel has been so well taken care of at Children's. They are doing such good work helping people in need. This support should continue and hopefully, hopefully they receive as much support as they need because when they [Resource Connect] are taken care of, we are taken care of. I hope this resource can help many more people."

The team in Resource Connect showed Manuel's family that help starts there. This is just one example out of the thousands of families Resource Connect has helped over the last few years. The next pages include highlights from each Resource Connect partner and examples of how this program is truly changing the way healthcare is delivered.

"The relationship between the partners is what makes Resource Connect optimal - the co-location and the convenience, the trust that is built in from having your provider you already trust refer you to supports. The other piece is that partners work collaboratively - benefits wants Healthy Roots to be successful, for example. We are in this together."



Sustainability

Evidence shows that access to CHWs can help improve healthcare access and outcomes, strengthen healthcare teams and enhance quality of life for people in low-income, underserved and diverse communities. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services recognizes that CHWs can play an integral part in achieving health equity and categorizes their use in various disease prevention and control programs as evidence-based. Many interventions that integrate CHWs into health care delivery and public health systems are associated with reductions in chronic illnesses, better medication adherence, increased patient involvement, improvements in overall community health and reduced healthcare costs.

Expanding access to CHWs for patients and community members is crucial to achieving health equity. As Colorado strives to solve for major workforce challenges in healthcare and public health, policy solutions that expand access to CHWs can also help build workforce capacity.

The lessons learned in Resource Connect have helped to inform legislation – to be introduced during the Colorado's 2023 Legislative session – which will enable Medicaid reimbursement for some of the services provided by CHWs and thereby create a sustainable path for this work.

"There is immense value in having the on-the-ground knowledge [of the Resource Connect team]. We couldn't do what we do without team members at Children's Colorado. We could do research, but the value of their knowledge and expertise is unmatched. I appreciate meeting with community health navigators (CHN) and learning how they work with families dynamically, how they view the system, hearing about unintended consequences, etc. The CHNs see and work with families directly — I don't have that vantage point. It is a necessity to have that connection and work with them so we can advocate in the best way possible."

ANDREA STOJSAVLJEVIC, SENIOR POLICY COORDINATOR, CHILDREN'S COLORADO GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS TEAM

CLAIRE, EVALUATION TEAM

CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL COLORADO



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