



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**State Associations Focusing on Community Health Secure
\$250,000 Grant to Advance Equity in Telehealth Care**

HARRISBURG, Pa. (March 29, 2021) --- The Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association (RCPA) and the Pennsylvania Association of Community Health Centers (PACHC) have secured a \$250,000 grant as part of a national initiative to cultivate health policy and a care system that is more equitable and better meets the needs of individuals and families.

The collaboration will focus on increasing access to care and developing a comprehensive policy framework and health-care plan for consumers with the use of telehealth.

“The confluence of pandemic-related restrictions and consumer needs presented a real care challenge. Without being able to meet face to face in many cases, telehealth platforms quickly became the service delivery vehicle for providers, consumers, stakeholders, and payors,” said RCPA President and CEO Richard S. Edley, Ph.D. “As with every crisis, these challenges opened our eyes to new opportunities. But we still have a long way to ensure telehealth expands in an equitable way for providers and the communities we serve.”

“The integration of physical and behavioral health is critical to the future success of delivering high quality health care services to the patients of Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) and behavioral health providers across the commonwealth,” said Cheri Rinehart, PACHC President and CEO. “The incorporation of telehealth services in the delivery of care was essential throughout the pandemic and will continue to be a crucial tool for providers to use in delivering whole person care for the communities they serve.”

The two-year grant to RCPA and PACHC is among six spanning eight states. It was awarded by the Delta Center for a Thriving Safety Net, which brings together primary care associations and behavioral health state associations to advance policy and practice change. The Delta Center project is supported by the National Council for Behavioral Health, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the National Association of Community Health Centers.

RCPA and PACHC will focus on creating planes of equity for telehealth access, with goals that include:

- Using consumer and advocate voices to drive policy and practice changes that ensure access to quality physical and behavioral health services and improve integrated care via telehealth.
- Partnering with legislators and stakeholders to develop telehealth standards in Pennsylvania that ensure sustained equity, access, and viabilities for consumers and practitioners.
- Supporting actionable strategies to address the social determinants of health.
- Sharing consumer feedback to develop training and technical assistance, health literacy campaigns, and language supports.

The collaboration between RCPA and PACHC brings together two of the largest community-based physical and behavioral health associations in the commonwealth.

RCPA is one of the largest and most diverse health and human services state associations in the country. With more than 350 member agencies, RCPA and its member agencies support more than 1 million Pennsylvanians in need of mental health, drug and alcohol, intellectual and developmental disabilities, children's, brain injury, medical rehabilitation, and physical disabilities and aging services.

PACHC represents and supports more than 350 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) delivery sites in Pennsylvania. FQHCs provide health care to more than 900,000 people, or 1 in 14 Pennsylvania residents annually. With sites in 52 of the 67 counties across the state, FQHCs have a presence in both rural and urban communities. In total, 47 community health center organizations comprise the largest network of primary care providers in the commonwealth.

Their work on this effort will help to build regulatory and policy structures to ensure expansion of telehealth practices while also developing metrics on consumer and practitioner experiences to impact regulatory and service platform considerations. Policies must reflect the diverse and inclusive needs of the communities each organization serves, and funding equity for face-to-face and telehealth visits must be considered in payments to providers to ensure success.

Besides Pennsylvania, teams from Alaska, Kansas and Oklahoma are involved in the study, as is a bi-state region team of New Hampshire and Vermont and a Gulf Coast Region team of Louisiana and Mississippi. Central to the grant program is that each team is comprised of a state behavioral health association and a primary care association (PCA).

For more information, visit <https://deltacenter.jsi.com/>.

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About the Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association (RCPA):

With well over 350 members, the majority of who serve over 1 million Pennsylvanians annually, Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association (RCPA) is among the largest and most diverse state health and human services trade associations in the nation. RCPA provider

members offer mental health, drug and alcohol, intellectual and developmental disabilities, children's, brain injury, medical rehabilitation, and physical disabilities and aging services, through all settings and levels of care. Visit www.paproviders.org for more information.

About the Pennsylvania Association of Community Health Centers (PACHC):

The Pennsylvania Association of Community Health Centers serves as the collective voice for Pennsylvania's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FHQCs), FQHC Look-Alikes (FQHCLAs), and non-profit Rural Health Clinics (RHCs). Our members are unique nonprofit primary care facilities that provide a wide array of services to Pennsylvanians in underserved areas of the state. There are nearly 300 sites in 52 counties serving nearly 900,000 Pennsylvanians. At these primary care facilities, patients will receive high quality care at a price they can afford with sliding fees based on income and family size. Visit www.pachc.org for more information.

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