

# ClinicCares at a Glance

April 2022

## Conversations with Clinic Directors and Healthcare Providers

Americares Reinforcing COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence project has launched a peer-to-peer learning network, called ClinicCares, to allow clinic directors and healthcare providers in free and charitable clinics to seek knowledge from their peers and share lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each month, under the larger umbrella of lessons learned, a new topic is selected to help guide these conversations.

For the April session, clinic directors and healthcare providers acknowledged the increased level of stress and burnout caused by the pandemic and discussed their strategies for improving resilience.

The following conversations between participants revealed

## 5 major takeaways:

### 1 Funding remains a significant stressor for clinic administrators

Clinics continue to lose staff due to their inability to match wages paid elsewhere – hospitals are offering significant signing bonuses as well as higher hourly wages. Many clinics have lost volunteers who were vulnerable because of their age or existing health conditions and have had to replace them with paid staff. Administrators are also anxious that vaccines and tests will no longer be available to the uninsured for free.

### 2 Reducing staff burnout and building resilience continue to be major clinic concerns

Many clinics are faith-based or mission-driven and have sessions such as devotionals to encourage their staff. Several clinics also support appropriate work/family balance by providing additional paid time off. Some participants noted that the topic of COVID-19 vaccines created tension within their social circles as people questioned the meaning of immunity. For some, the relaxing of mask mandates indicated that we'd reached a high enough level of immunity to warrant fewer precautions.

### 3 Healthcare providers need more resources to care for long COVID patients

Healthcare providers strive to provide services to those who are suffering from long COVID, but uninsured individuals lack access to specialists such as cardiologists, pulmonologists and even to stress tests. Other providers are increasingly concerned about 'brain fog' and cognitive functioning.

### 4 Telehealth has both advantages and risks associated with it

Clinics report that the 'silver lining' of the pandemic has been the provision of telehealth for those who experience transportation challenges. At the same time, there is concern about the lack of continuity of care. Telehealth also allows patients to 'double-dip' on medications as medical records are not centralized. Some clinics are using telehealth translators and scribes.

### 5 Free and charitable clinics continue to serve many minority populations and people with chronic conditions

For example, one clinic reported that 20% of their county population was Hispanic but 65% of their patients were. Some clinics have recruited students in language programs to serve as translators and mitigate the cost of translation services. Clinics report that they are striving to 'catch up' with patients from when their clinics were closed early in the pandemic. They're especially focused on those who require treatment for chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension.



Americares is a health-focused relief and development organization that responds to people affected by poverty or disaster with life-changing health programs, medicine, medical supplies and emergency aid.

Disclaimer: This project was funded in whole by a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention grant number 6 NU50CK000588-02-02. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is an agency within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this resource center do not necessarily represent the policy of CDC or HHS and should not be considered an endorsement by the Federal Government.