

Health center awarded \$5 million grant to expand

By [Guy Boulton](#) of the Journal Sentinel
May 1, 2012

Progressive Community Health Centers Inc. has won a \$5 million federal grant to replace its clinic in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Milwaukee, a move that could eventually double the number of patients served.

The community health center plans to replace its 8,500-square-foot clinic at 3522 W. Lisbon Ave. with a 42,000 square-foot clinic projected to cost \$10 million to \$11 million. It also has received a \$2 million commitment from Froedtert Health for the project.

Progressive is among five community health centers in Wisconsin that will receive a total of \$16.1 million in federal grants to expand.

The grants, announced Tuesday, are part of \$11 billion allocated under the Affordable Care Act, the federal health care reform law, to expand community health centers.

Located in low-income urban neighborhoods and rural areas, the health centers provide care primarily for people covered by Medicaid and for the uninsured. People without health insurance are treated on a sliding-fee scale tied to their incomes.

Community health centers provided care for about 271,000 people in Wisconsin in 2010, the most recent year for which final figures are available. That included nearly 78,000 people in Milwaukee.

The number of people treated at community health centers in Wisconsin has more than tripled since 1999.

The other community health centers in Wisconsin awarded grants Tuesday are:

- Family Health Center of Marshfield Inc., Marshfield, \$4.4 million.
- Madison Community Health Center Inc., which operates under the name Access Community Health Centers, Madison, \$3 million.
- Primary Connection Health Care Inc., Wausau, \$3.4 million.
- Outreach Community Health Centers, formerly Healthcare for the Homeless of Milwaukee, Milwaukee, \$348,853.

The community health centers estimate the grants will help them provide care for an additional 29,306 patients in Wisconsin, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Nationally, grants totaling \$728 million were awarded to community health centers for renovation and construction projects.

The grants are expected to provide access to health care for an additional 860,000 people.

Progressive's clinic project is widely considered one of the immediate and tangible steps that could be taken to improve access to primary care in low-income neighborhoods in Milwaukee.

"When I walked into the door seven years ago, the board told me, 'We need a new clinic,' " said Jenni Sevenich, the executive director and chief executive of the community health center.

Progressive provided care for 8,500 patients last year, up from 5,500 patients in 2008. Five years from now, with the new clinic, it anticipates seeing almost 20,000 patients a year.

By comparison, Milwaukee Health Services saw almost 30,000 patients, and Sixteenth Street Community Health Center saw almost 31,000 patients last year.

Progressive - which employs about 68 people and had \$5.7 million in revenue last year - hopes to raise more money for the clinic.

"The less we have to finance, the better," Sevenich said.

The community health center plans to begin construction in six to nine months and to open the new clinic in the summer of 2014.

It owns the site, which is next to its existing clinic. That clinic will be torn down and the site used for parking once the new facility is completed.

Outreach Community Health Centers, which recently replaced its main clinic, expects to see 11,000 to 12,000 patients this year.

A spokesman for Outreach could not be reached Tuesday.

The Affordable Care Act allocated \$9.5 billion to expand community health centers over five years and \$1.5 billion to support major construction and renovation projects.

The goal was to prepare for a projected increase in demand from tens of millions of people becoming insured after 2014.

Federal budget cuts subsequently reduced the new money available for the community health centers by \$3 billion over five years.

The Affordable Care Act has supported the construction and renovation of 190 health center clinics and the creation of 67 new clinics across the country, according to the Department of Health and Human Services.

Find this article at:

<http://www.jsonline.com/business/progressive-community-health-center-awarded-5-million-grant-to-expand-fk5822s-149657885.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.