

CHWs Improving Primary Care for Older Adults in Rural Oregon

Jodi Ready, MD, Providence Hood River Internal Medicine



Connected Care for Older Adults: Community Health Workers improving care for older adults

Oregon Rural Health Forum
October 3, 2025





Connected Care is an innovative pilot program that uses Community Health Workers (CHWs) in Primary Care settings to improve care for frail older adults in rural areas.

- **For patients 55 and older** identified as frail by a Primary Care Provider and not currently receiving in home medical support.
- **CHWs conduct home visits** and implement the Connected Care Protocols based on the Age-Friendly Health Systems - What Matters, Medication, Mentation, and Mobility.
- CHWs provide **information and education** to patients and families, connect them with existing **community services**, and connect them with **further assessment and support**.
- CHWs chart **directly in the EMR, and route important information** or actions needed back to the patient's Primary Care Clinician and health care team.
- Patients complete the program when relevant protocols are finished and priority needs are met - **roughly 90-days.**

The Connected Care Protocols are based on the 4Ms of the IHI's Age-Friendly Health Systems Framework. Each protocol includes tools, scripts, and resources that help CHWs discover important information about a patient's well being, wishes, and priorities.



What Matters

- What Matters Conversation
- Support to complete the Advance Directive



Mentation

- Info on normal brain aging
- Pre-screening for dementia, anxiety, depression, and social isolation



Medication

- Conduct in-home medication review and compare to current med list
- Flag any issues for clinician review



Mobility

- STEADI fall risk assessment
- Footwear review
- In-home fall risk assessment
- Exercise plan

CHWs identify and support social needs



Connected Care CHWs work with patients and families to identify social needs such as housing, food access, transportation, assistance with activities of daily living, financial security, and more. They connect patients and caregivers with community resources to address their needs.

What are the goals of Connected Care?

1. Improve patient, caregiver, and provider experience
2. Improve health outcomes and quality of life
3. Integrate the 4Ms into Primary Care
4. Decrease low-value/high-cost care
5. Improve health equity and access to care



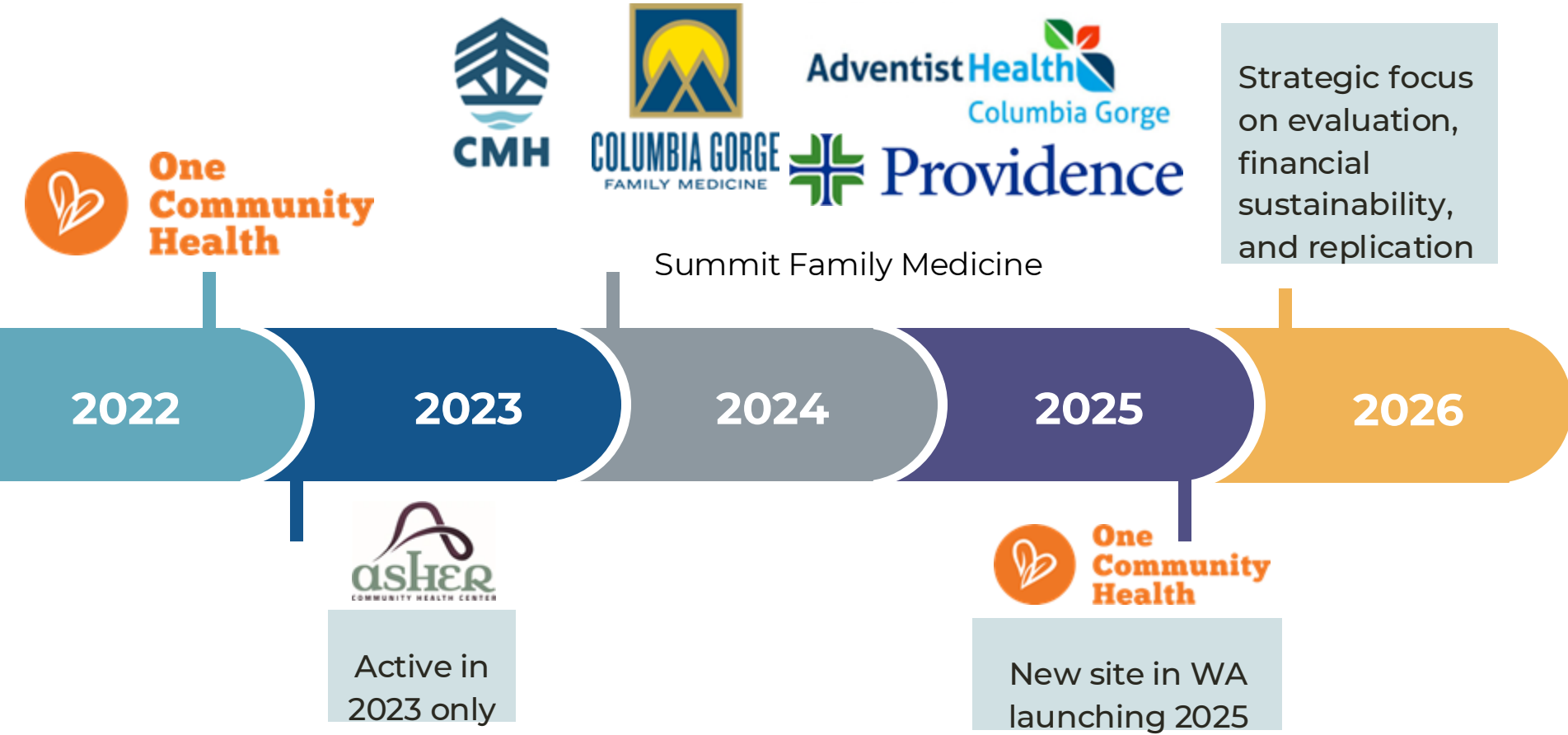
**Better care for
older adults in
rural areas**

Connected Care in Action: Message from a CCOA CHW

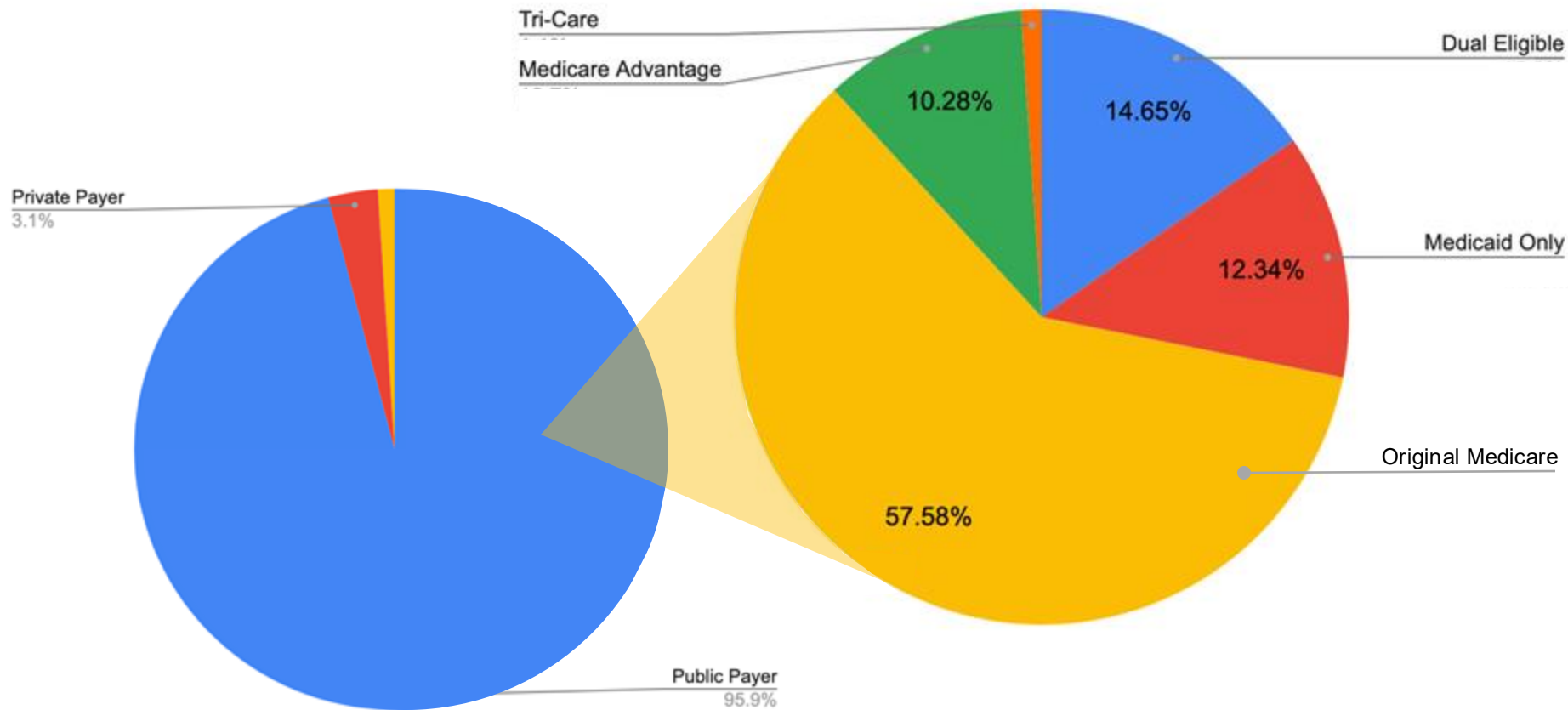


Rosa Zavala, CNA, CHW
Connected Care for Older Adults CHW
Adventist Health Columbia Gorge

6 pilots now in process at rural clinics in Oregon

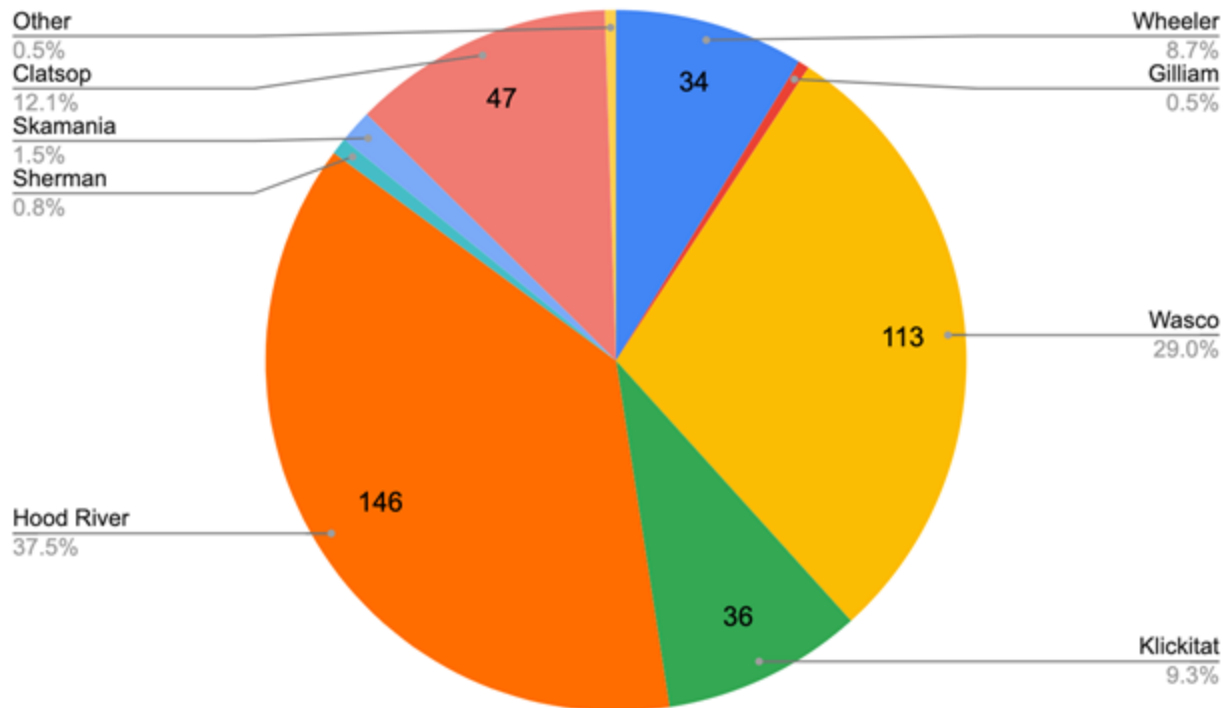


Enrolled Patients by Insurance Coverage (n=389)



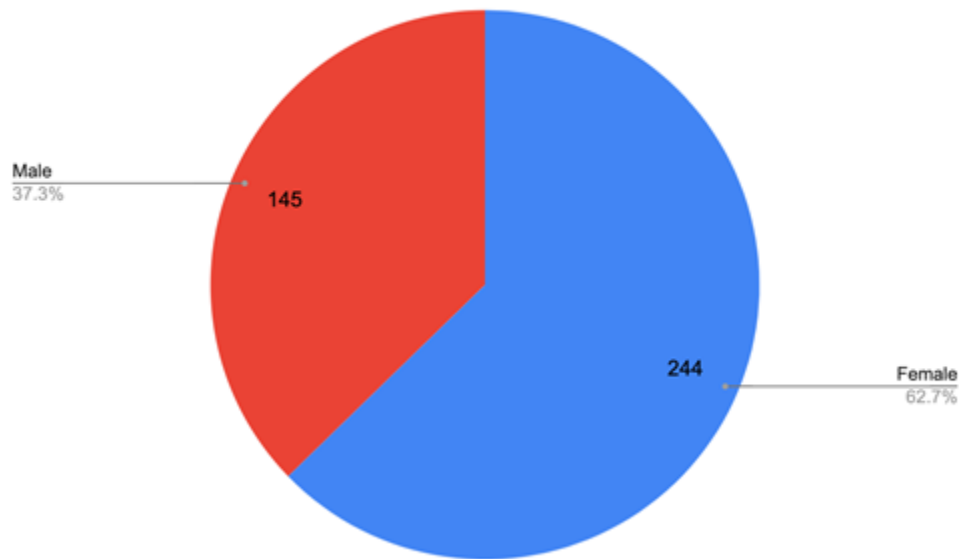
Patients Enrolled by County (n=389)

Patients by County of Residence

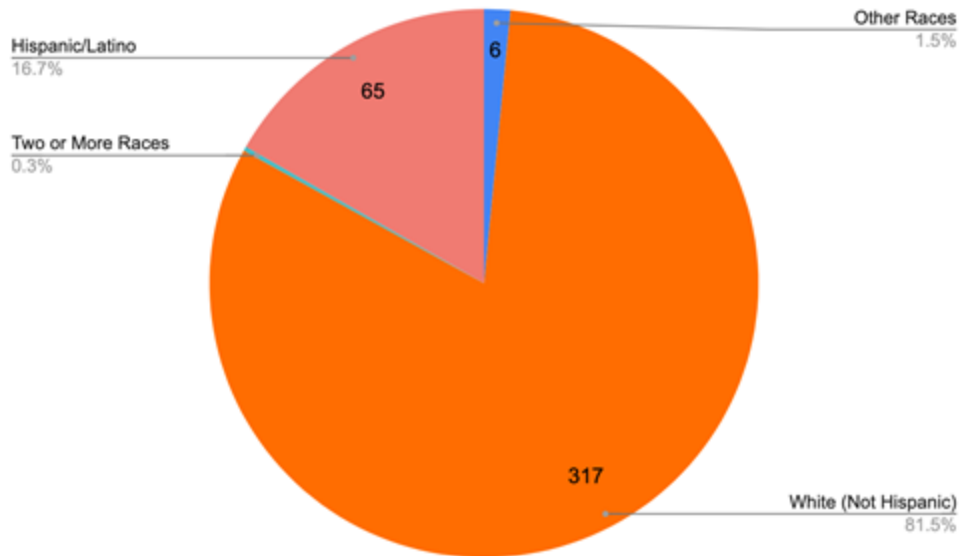


Enrolled Patient Characteristics (n=389)

Patients by Gender

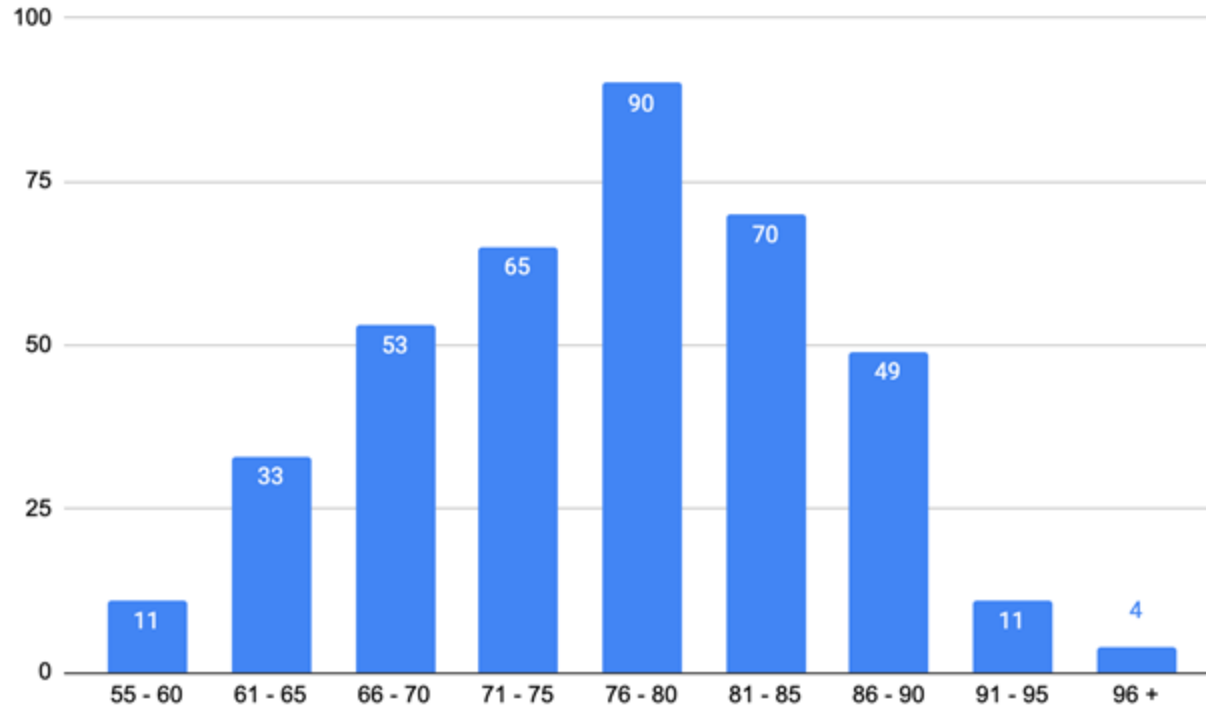


Patient Race and Ethnicity



Enrolled Patient Characteristics (n=389)

Patients by Age at Time of Referral

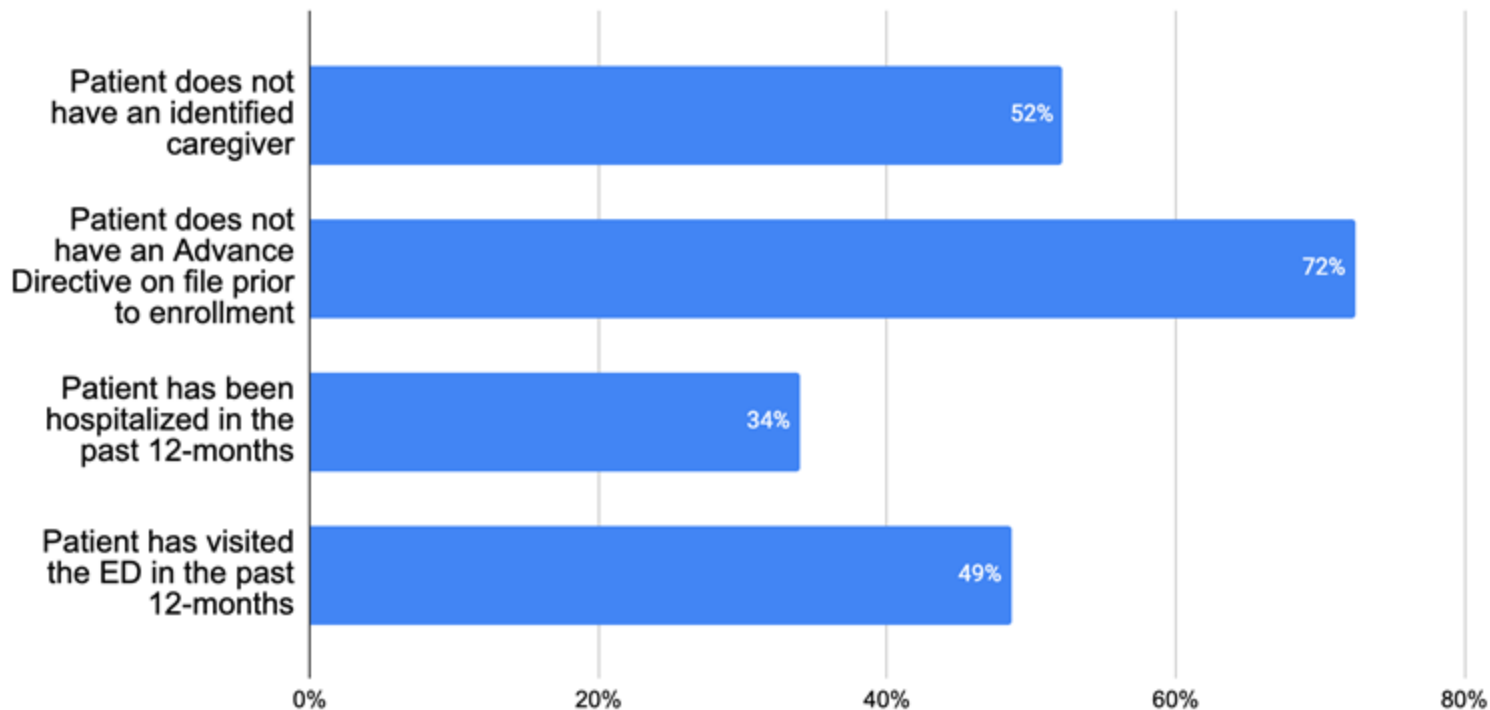


Average age: 77

Patients range in
age from 51 to 101
years old

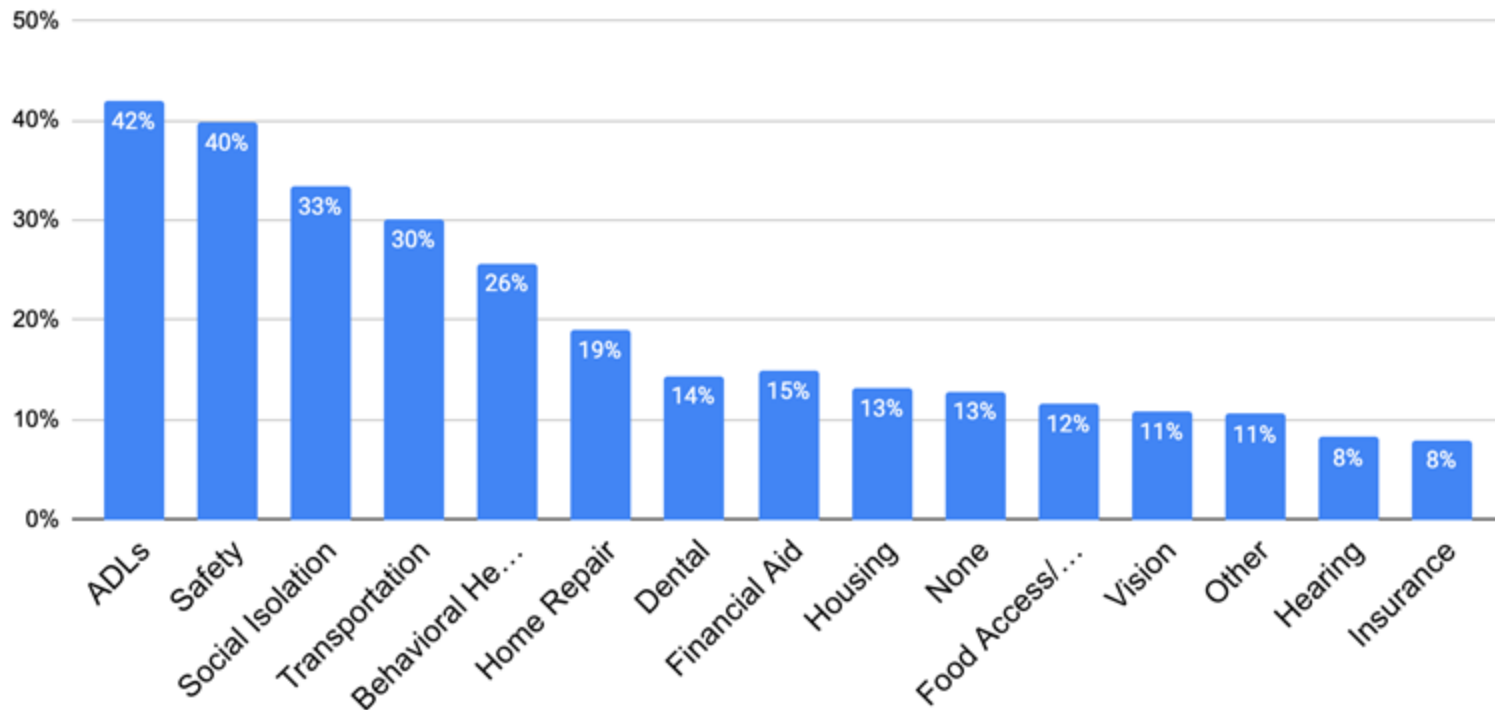
Enrolled Patient Characteristics (n=389)

Other Patient Characteristics at Enrollment



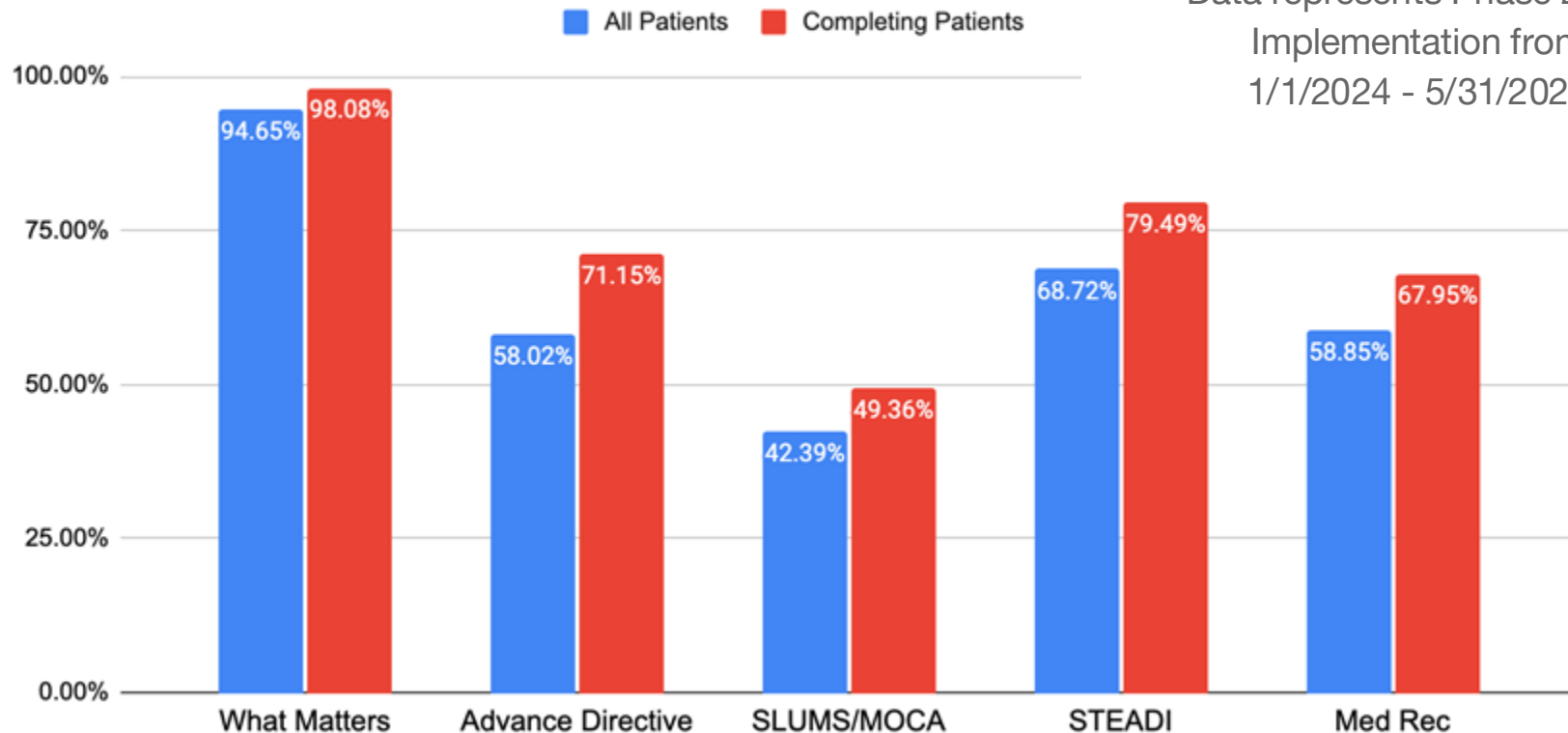
Social Needs Identified at Enrollment (n=389)

Other Patient Needs Identified At Enrollment



Evidence-based Interventions (n=243)*

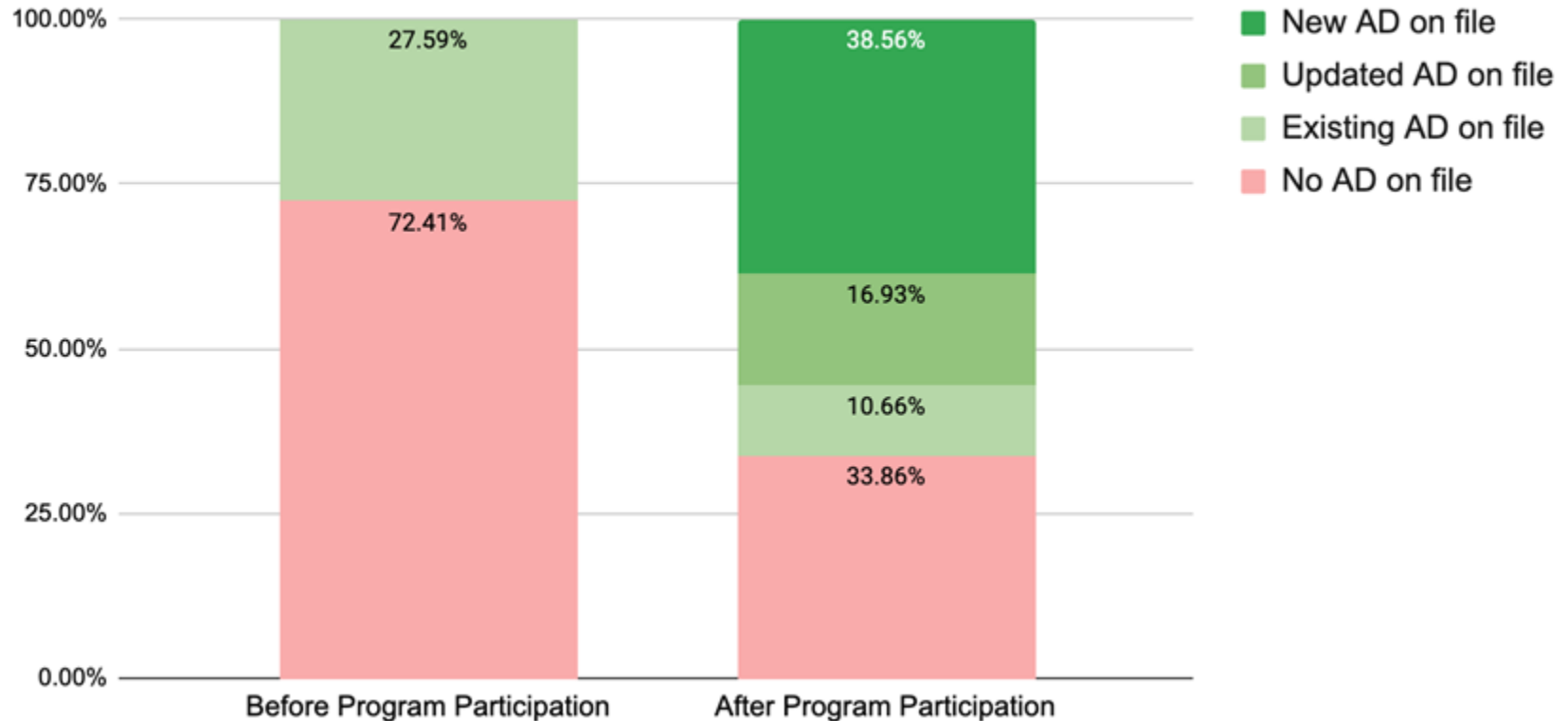
Evidence Based Interventions During Program



*Data represents Phase 2 Pilot
Implementation from
1/1/2024 - 5/31/2025

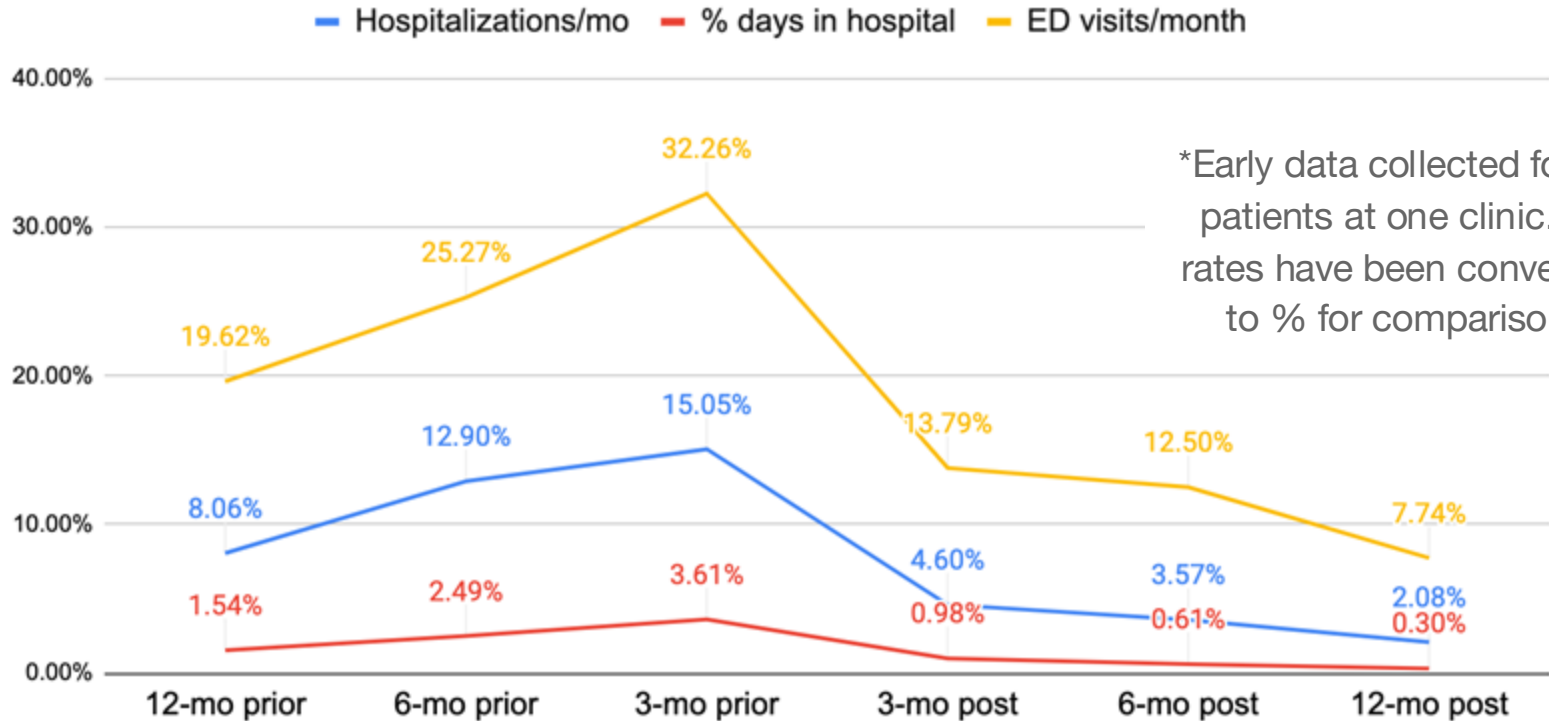
Advance Directive Completion (n=319)

Advance Directive Completion - All Patients



Reductions in High Cost Utilization (n=29)*

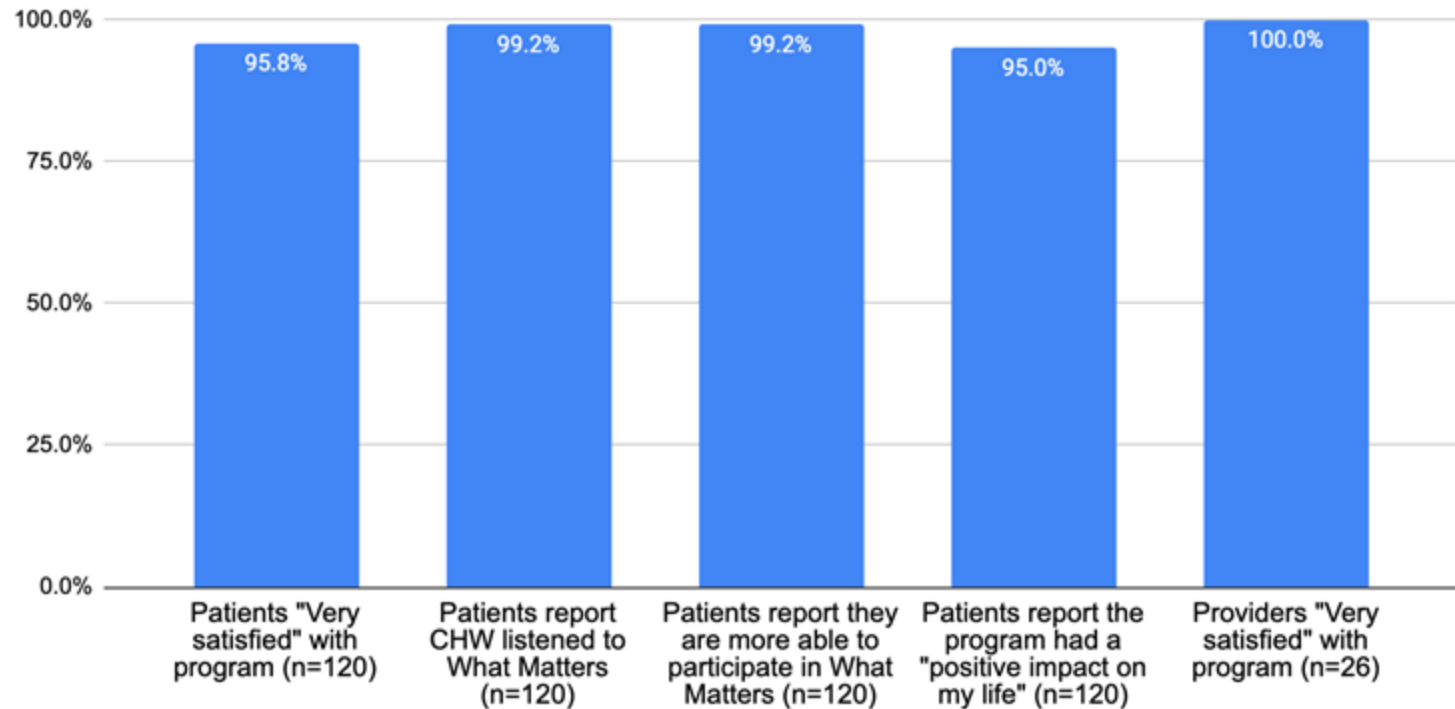
High Cost Utilization Rates Pre and Post Enrollment (n=29)*



*Early data collected for 29 patients at one clinic. All rates have been converted to % for comparison.

Participant Experience with Connected Care

Participant Experience with Connected Care



Anecdotal Feedback about Connected Care

- “I was able to stay in my residence...without fear of eviction and was able to have the landlord update many of the things in the home that were worse for wear. The Community Health Worker gave me my peace of mind. ” - Patient
- “Meeting with Connected Care helped me to make decisions and changes that will improve my daily life.” - Patient
- “I appreciate the ability to have extended "eyes and ears" in my patients' homes.” - Clinician
- “I absolutely want to see this program thrive and grow in order to help increase access to services for some of our most vulnerable patients. I love it!” - Clinician

What are we learning?

- Connected Care is a promising model for enhancing primary care services for older adult patients in rural settings.
- It successfully integrates the Age Friendly Care and the 4Ms into primary care and patient care planning.
- Patients, caregivers, AND providers appreciate the program.
- The model has been successfully implemented at FQHCs, RHCs, CHCs, and small private practices. It offers structured interventions for CHWs to follow that can be flexibly implemented in different clinic setting.
- For about \$1,500 per patient, it makes meaningful positive impact on Advance Directive completion, ED and hospital utilization.

Current Strategic Priorities

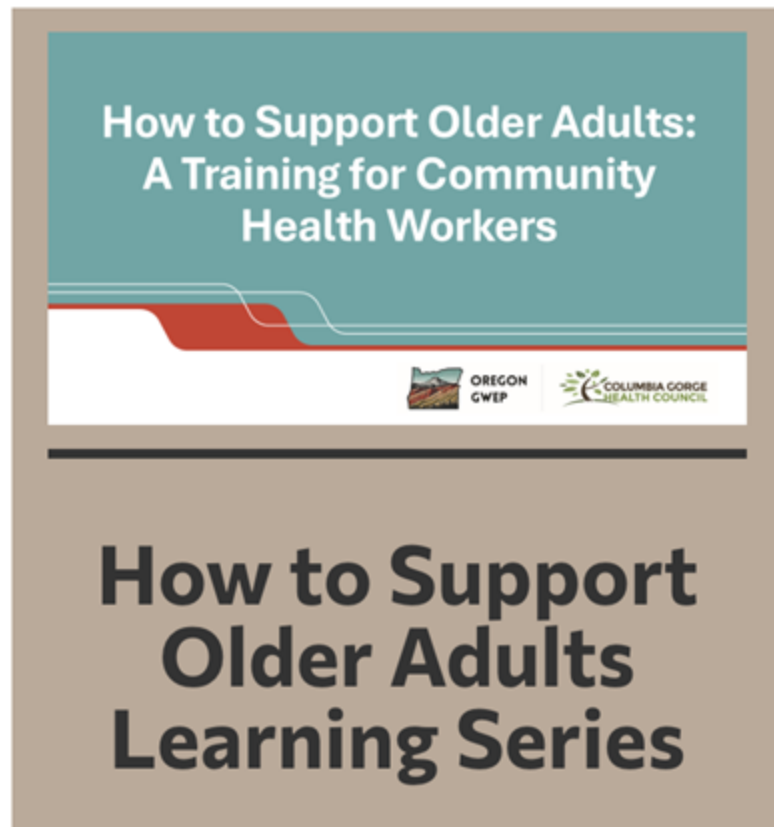
1. Secure grant funding to support pilot implementation through 2026.
2. Verify (through expanded data collection) the cost savings and impact on ED and hospital utilization related to program participation.
3. Develop and test viable, sustainable payment and billing strategies to support the work of Connected Care CHWs beyond the pilot.
4. Document and share key learnings related to CHWs and Age Friendly Health Systems.
5. Codify the Connected Care protocols, training, and implementation processes so the model can be replicated in primary care settings across the state and country.



OREGON GWEP

In partnership with the Oregon GWEP and the Geriatrics Department at OHSU, we have created a free online learning series for CHWs interested in supporting older adults:

<https://oregongwep.org/education-training/#professionals>



Questions



For more information about Connected Care



- Dr. Jodi Ready, Columbia Gorge Health Council Board, jodiready@gmail.com
- Lindsay Miller, Project Lead, lindsaymillerconsulting@gmail.com
- Dr. Elizabeth Foster, Clinical Advisory Panel Older Adult Work Group, foster.eliz@gmail.com
- www.connectedcareforolderadults.org