

Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Testing

Sun River Health began rapid and PCR COVID-19 testing in March of 2020 at high-traffic community locations throughout our service area, both as pop-up sites and at our health centers. As of February 2021, our organization has provided **over 65,000 COVID-19 tests**, with an overall **positivity rate of 17%**.

As a first line of defense against COVID-19, Sun River Health has gone above and beyond to meet the needs of our communities. Staff came out of retirement to help the effort, we increased capacity for telemedicine interventions, cared for patients at homeless shelters, coordinated emergency call response, stood up and staffed the NYC hotel effort for hospital employees and individuals experiencing homelessness, brought mobile services to hard-to-reach populations (including migrant and seasonal farmworkers), provided thousands of hours of education and public health messages about how to stay safe, coordinated local and regional efforts with partners, departments of health and others.



Staff at Sun River Health Peekskill pop-up COVID-19 testing

Vaccination

As a Community Health Center, we are situated in underserved areas where **49% of our patients** prefer a language other than English. We have vaccinated nearly **60,000 individuals**, over 1,200 of those being our employees, yet we have a waiting list of over **10,000 people** and the flow of vaccines has been inconsistent and unpredictable. We serve 28,000 patients over the age of 65 who qualify for the vaccine, over 9,000 agricultural workers, over 21,000 individuals experiencing homelessness, nearly 29,000 residents of public housing, and over 195,000 individuals with chronic conditions such as asthma, COPD, diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, and obesity. During recent special events we vaccinated an additional 2,000 senior residents of public housing, and essential workers from low-income minority communities from categories 1A and 1B. We know when we are provided with additional vaccines and resources, we will continue to be a main access hub for our communities of essential workers.

Financial Impact

The financial impact of the pandemic on Sun River Health has come in many forms. While our innovative solutions for vulnerable populations included telemedicine pre-pandemic, we expanded telehealth throughout our network in 2020. NYS reimbursement failed to keep pace, as a lack of parity between audio-only and audio-with-video rates resulted in an estimated \$12 million reduction in our Medicaid revenue for the rate year beginning October 1, 2021, and a 40% reduction in Medicare and Third-Party insurance claims. The reduction to in-person visits alone led to a decrease in overall collections of approximately \$1 million across all payors. Though we were able to retain connection to some populations through telehealth, the shift away from in-person in our Adult Day Health Care program, caused a dramatic decrease in patient census and a \$2.9 million decrease in claims from 2019 to 2020 – a 40% decrease in overall revenue year over year.

The crisis of state and local funding has had an outsized impact on Sun River Health as we work closely with our municipalities and departments of health, in some cases acting as the public health arm for an entire county. In Suffolk County for instance, our funding will be cut by \$6 million per year, or 50%, beginning in July 2021, should the state fail to secure substantial federal aid. These losses come at a time when many of our contracts have already been subjected to the 20% statewide cuts. In a county that has been a hot-spot for COVID-19 for the past year, we're in the position of relying on federal action to maintain services in a high-risk region. The pandemic has placed increased financial stress on community health centers across the nation who were already operating with thin margins, despite being the primary care safety net system for more than 30 million patients nationwide and 2.3 million New Yorkers.

For more information on the efforts of Sun River Health to combat COVID-19, contact Sean Leahy – sleahy@sunriver.org

About Sun River Health

Sun River Health is a network of 43 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) providing primary, dental, pediatric, OB-GYN, and behavioral health care to over 245,000 patients annually. With a dedicated staff of 2,000 doctors, nurses, and health care professionals, we pride ourselves on delivering high-quality, affordable care to those who need it most. Sun River Health started in 1975 when four African American mothers spearheaded efforts to open our first health center in Peekskill, New York to deliver accessible, high-quality, affordable services to patients in need – no matter their race, religion, income, or insurance status. Today, after 45 years of service, Sun River Health is still delivering on that promise to communities across the Hudson Valley, New York City, and Long Island.