



History of Fairfield Community Health Center

The first documented reference to a medical clinic for the uninsured and underinsured in Fairfield County, Ohio was found in the March 5, 1992, meeting minutes for the City of Lancaster Board of Health (BOH). These minutes indicated that a feasibility study was being conducted and that there was a good response from area physicians who were willing to donate their services to assist in the start up of such a clinic. Throughout early 1992, physician surveys were conducted, the City of Lancaster Health Department discussed the matter with the Lancaster-Fairfield Community Hospital (now Fairfield Medical Center) on June 23, 1992, and all indications were that community support was strong for starting the clinic. The purpose of the medical clinic was to provide health care services for the citizens of Lancaster and Fairfield County who could not otherwise afford such services.

On October 1, 1992, the Lancaster City Board of Health (BOH) voted to form an Executive Steering Committee to help develop the policies and procedures needed to open a medical clinic. The terminology for this clinic was changed to Outpatient Health Facility (OHF) at the November 5, 1992, BOH meeting and 15 persons were asked to serve on a feasibility committee. The committee met on December 1, 1992 and determined that \$35,000.00 would be needed in start up funds, the Lancaster-Fairfield Community Hospital would be approached for in-kind funds, and that a clinic physician would be needed.

At the January 7, 1993, BOH meeting, the Clinic Advisory Committee announced the name of the OHF would be the Lancaster-Fairfield Health Clinic and that minimal clinic services would start at the City Health Department site. On February 4, 1993, the BOH set a tentative clinic opening date of June 1, 1993.

During the next several months, the advisory committee and health department staff conducted considerable research into the OHF and decided that a permanent clinic administrator would need to be hired. Interviews were conducted and Mr. Edward Sachs was hired as the first clinic administrator at a special BOH meeting on June 14, 1993. The clinic officially opened on September 30, 1993. The early operation of the clinic was accomplished with minimal staffing and volunteer physicians until permanent staff could be hired at a later date.

The first State of Ohio inspection of the new clinic was conducted on March 28, 1994. The results were good and the OHF was officially approved with a retroactive date of May 30, 1994. Dr. James Merk was hired as the first full time physician employee for the clinic as of January 2, 1995. Dr. Mark Aebi was also hired as the part time Medical Director at this time. Dr. Aebi had previously served as the voluntary Medical Director for the City Health Department since August 1, 1991. The Lancaster-Fairfield Health Clinic operated as part of the City of Lancaster Department of Health until December 31, 2001. On January 1, 2002, the cities of Lancaster and Pickerington and the county of Fairfield combined their health departments to form the Fairfield County Combined General Health District. With the merger the Lancaster-Fairfield Health Clinic became part of the Fairfield County Combined General Health District as of January 1, 2002. In 2006 the state of Ohio enacted many changes to the Medicaid system, several of which were financially devastating to the OHF model of providing primary care. It was determined at that time to apply for Federally Qualified Health Center-Look Alike (FQHC-LA) status in order to be able to continue to operate the OHF. FQHC-LA's are health centers that have been identified by HRSA and certified by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services as meeting the definition of "health center" under Section 330 of the PHS Act, although they do not receive grant funding under Section 330 (see <http://bphc.hrsa.gov/> for more information). The OHF clinic was designated an FQHC-LA on April 24, 2007 and began providing a true medical home to its patients. As part of the transition, the OHF clinic name was changed to the Fairfield County Community Health Center (FCCHC). As part of the transition from an OHF clinic to a FQHC-LA, FCCHC moved into its current home located at 1155 East Main Street, Lancaster, Ohio 43130. The site, a former private group medical practice, was leased by FCCHC and occupied on October 1, 2007.

In December, 2007 FCCHC submitted a proposal to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for Section 330 funding to become a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). In February, 2009 they received word of two year funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, in the amount of \$1,162,316 and designation as a full FQHC. As a new start FQHC, HRSA provides technical assistance (TA) visits to all newly funded FQHC's. FCCHC had their new start TA visit June 1-3, 2009. One of the main recommendations coming from the TA visit was that the Fairfield County Combined General Health District needed to separate itself from the FQHC. This was recommended in order to separate public health from the health center operations. The goal of the Community Health Center program is to have health centers which are community controlled. In order to accomplish this goal it was recommended by the TA visit that a private non-profit corporation be established and assume control of FCCHC.

To achieve the goal of providing the best possible care to everyone, regardless of their ability to pay, FCCHC started the process to reorganize itself following the HRSA TA visit. It was decided at this time to hire a fulltime CEO to lead the transition from a public health controlled clinic to a private non-profit community health center. After an extensive search for a CEO, Clint Kuntz, was hired as the first CEO of FCHC, he assumed the role starting on September 1, 2009. In order to better present the community

health center to everyone it serves as part of the transition, the name was changed to Fairfield Community Health Center (FCHC).

Fairfield Community Health Center (FCHC) was incorporated in the State of Ohio on September 15, 2009. FCHC began operating as a community health center in 2009. FCHC provides comprehensive primary health care services for the uninsured and/or underinsured residents of Fairfield County, Ohio.

FCHC functions as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) and as such is organized and operated in a manner consistent with the FQHC program. Services are provided to people of all ages, and no one is denied access to care due to race, ethnicity, and/or ability to pay. FCHC provides primary care, OB/GYN and pediatric services to patients. Additionally, FCHC patients have access to Dental, Behavioral Health, Pharmacy services and have support provided with case management, patient education and outreach activities. Operating under Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act, FCHC serves a Medically Underserved Population (MUP). FCHC is governed by Board of Directors composed of at least 51% of users of the services of FCHC.