

NY health centers say \$5M for Covid-19 response is 'insufficient'

New York community health centers will receive \$5.2 million in federal funds to [help them respond](#) to the pandemic in an aid package that several health networks said wasn't commensurate with the role clinics will play in the crisis.

The funding was part of \$100 million that the Department of Health and Human Services set aside for health centers in a broader \$8.3 billion aid package.

The federally qualified health centers treat poor and uninsured New Yorkers and are seeing patients turn up in their offices with Covid-19.

"The \$100 million is so insufficient given clinical, administrative and financial pressure on all community health centers," said James Sinkoff, the chief financial officer of Hudson River Healthcare, a network of health centers with 43 locations in New York City, Long Island and the Hudson Valley. "New York community health centers are under tremendous strain at this time."

HRHCare will receive about \$319,000 in grants as it tries to reengineer the network's model to provide virtual care and help patients avoid unnecessary exposure to Covid-19.

"We've been planning and implementing certain programs of telemedicine to sustain us," said Anne Kauffman Nolon, the network's CEO. "It's a transformation we've gotten to quickly."

The site's clinics remain open for patients seeking in-person treatment.

The network has tested more than 300 patients for Covid-19 and some have tested positive. On Monday it started moving testing outside the doors of its health centers.

Other services such as non-emergency dental care and adult day health programs for people with HIV/AIDS have been eliminated to follow guidance on stopping the spread of the virus and protecting vulnerable populations.

HRHCare's grant was the state's largest, with most health centers receiving \$50,000 to \$100,000. Community Healthcare Network, which has 14 clinics and a mobile health center, will receive about \$99,000.

Robert Hayes, Community Healthcare Network's CEO, noted that the state Medicaid program is not paying the same amount for telehealth visits as it would for an in-person visit.

"It is a drop in the bucket—for us, less than one-tenth of 1% of our budget," Hayes said. "Many FQHC's are already in dire financial straits, with revenue down anywhere from 50 to 80%. Even the strongest, including Community Healthcare Network, cannot hold on for long without millions of dollars in support."