

Project H.O.P.E.'s Mission and COVID-19

At Project H.O.P.E., our mission is to improve the health and well-being of homeless persons and others in need within the greater Camden, New Jersey area by providing primary, preventative and related health care services. Project H.O.P.E is dedicated to providing care for all members of our community, regardless of their ability to pay. In past years, this has meant providing a full spectrum of care, including primary care services, behavioral health services, addiction medicine treatment, and more. Project H.O.P.E was at the front line of care in combatting the nation's opioid crisis by providing medication-assisted treatment to patients beginning in 2014.

The **COVID-19 pandemic added a major new role for Project H.O.P.E. in response to emerging health priorities in our community.** As patients and community members looked to physicians, health centers, and other medical experts, Project H.O.P.E. was well-positioned to meet the emerging needs the COVID-19 public health emergency by providing testing, prevention, diagnosis, vaccines and care for those affected by the virus. As vaccines became available, local and national health care entities turned to health centers, such as Project H.O.P.E., to facilitate distribution.

It's been a difficult year and the pandemic provided many unknowns, but at Project H.O.P.E., our team quickly adapted as new challenges arose. During the COVID-19 public health emergency, Project H.O.P.E. quickly increased staffing levels to maintain ongoing primary care operations and respond to the demands of new workflows for vaccinations and testing; conducted trainings to ensure our clinical staff remained up to date on the identification, movement, and mitigation of the spread of the virus; and purchased personal protective equipment to ensure the safety of our staff and patients.

In March 2020, for the safety and protection of both patients and staff, we moved to a telemedicine model for medical or behavioral health visits. Realizing not everyone has ready access to broadband internet or may have limited cell phone minutes, we purchased cell phones. We knew this investment was needed to ensure no one would go without access to care. Patients who did not have a device for telemedicine were given a Project H.O.P.E. cell phone to complete their telephonic visit on our mobile health van.

In December 2020, when the first vaccines were approved, **Project H.O.P.E. was identified by the New Jersey Department of Health as one of the Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) official distribution locations in Camden County.** Again, we increased staffing and, as space was already at a premium, we established a second vaccination location at Joseph's House in Camden, NJ.

At our West Street location, Project H.O.P.E.'s community room was converted into a COVID-19 screening and testing area. Once again, as demand for testing and vaccines

increased, we further expanded our capabilities, adding additional staff and erected a tent that became a permanent fixture in our parking lot

We, also, took the vaccine into the community. We administered vaccines to recipients at various nonprofits in Camden, we took vaccines to local churches to administer to the senior community members, and local schools to administer vaccines to eligible students and their families, as well as school administrators. We held a community vaccine event where people could stop in with no appointment and receive not only a vaccine, but also household products, free pizza and fresh produce, as well. As of September 24, 2021, our team has administered 12,217 COVID-19 vaccinations and 11,030 COVID-19 tests.

In May 2021, we re-opened for face to face medical and behavioral health visits.

It's a great achievement that we have been able to vaccinate thousands against this deadly virus. But we are not out of the woods yet.

We recognize the future is uncertain. **However, we remain vigilant and steadfast to our mission.** We remain well-positioned to meet the ongoing needs of patients in need of primary care services, behavioral health services, addiction medicine treatment, and other emerging chronic health emergencies or priorities in our community.

We hope you see that mission and our team as deserving of your support. Without it, none of this would be possible.

In Gratitude,

Patricia DeShields, MSW, LSW, RN
CEO, Project H.O.P.E., Inc.