

Press Release

For immediate publication

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New Healthcare Services Coming to Spencer: CHC to Open New Location in 2025

Community Health Center of Fort Dodge, Inc will expand into Spencer in 2025 with the opening of a new Federally Qualified Health Center. A Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) is a healthcare provider that receives federal funding to offer comprehensive services to underserved communities. FQHCs focus on providing primary care, dental care, mental health services, and more. They accept Medicare, Medicaid, most major insurance and offer a sliding fee scale to ensure services are affordable. FQHCs are committed to delivering high-quality care and are supported by funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Spencer was selected for a new location based on the need in Northwest Iowa and it being a good hub of the region.

“The Northwest part of the state has been an area we have been looking at for a few years due to lack of resources for the underserved population in that part of the state. We have seen patients traveling from this area to our center in Fort Dodge for care.” said Renae Kruckenberg, CEO of Community Health Center of Fort Dodge. “Discussions began at our 2020 strategic planning session and have continued with our board the last few years, but it really started moving in May when we had conversations with Dr. David Keith, Medical Director with Clay County Public Health, and State Representative, Megan Jones.” she went on to say.

The new location in Spencer will offer primary medical, dental and behavioral health (mental health) services and will operate under the umbrella of Community Health Center of Fort Dodge, Inc doing business as Community Health Center of Spencer. The Fort Dodge location has been in operation since 2006 where it began with medical and dental services, in 2016 they did a building expansion and added behavioral health services and in 2020 they expanded again creating additional dental operatories as well as additional behavioral health offices. Community Health Center also has locations in Dayton which opened in 2014, Mason City, which opened in 2018, Eagle Grove, which opened in 2023 and Clarion which opened in August of 2024. As an FQHC they have a governing board with a majority of health center patients to ensure that community needs and perspectives are represented in decision-making. Their comprehensive services, acceptance of all patients regardless of their ability to pay and focus on quality health care accessibility to all are their most important qualities.

“While we are excited to make this announcement, there is still work to be done before we can share where our new location will be as well as our opening date” said Kruckenberg. “We are

grateful for the local connections we have made with both Curt Strouth, President/CEO with the Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation and Sheriffa Jones, Executive Director with the Spencer Chamber, they have been a huge help with arranging meetings and tours and have just been a great resource every step of the way. We have also been working closely with Aaron Todd, CEO of the Iowa Primary Care Association and Sara Dixon, Senior Director of Partnerships & Development with the Iowa Primary Care Association, who have been vital in providing needed data and connections to us for this project.” Kruckenberg went on to say.

Sheriffa Jones, Executive Director of the Spencer Chamber, shared "The expansion of the Community Health Center to Spencer is a significant milestone for the entire Northwest Iowa region, benefiting both residents and employers. As we know, healthier individuals lead to happier, more productive employees, fostering overall wellness within our community. This project is a prime example of collaboration among multiple stakeholders working toward a common goal for the greater good. The Spencer Chamber is excited to support the Community Health Center throughout the renovation process, hiring efforts, and beyond, as we work together to enhance the long-term health and prosperity of our region."

CHC has already received approval from the Federal Government for a change in Scope for the practice, explored buildings and met with architects and local leaders about the project. The next steps will be the finalizing of a building purchase, renovation work to the building, recruitment of providers and hiring of staff, according to Kruckenberg.

“We plan to start the hiring process soon; we want to get an office manager in place who can help oversee the renovations and assist in hiring staff. We'd also like to have time for staff to train at our Fort Dodge location to better understand CHC, their role, and about working at a Federally Qualified Health Center.” said Colleen Miller, COO of Community Health Center of Fort Dodge. The clinic intends to start with around 15 employees which will include medical, dental and behavioral health providers, support staff, office manager, receptionists and a community outreach position. “We anticipate expanding our team and increasing staffing over the next few years to meet the growing needs of the community, ensuring that we can provide comprehensive care across all service areas as demand rises.” Miller went on to say.

“On behalf of the Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation, I want to congratulate the whole team at Community Health Center on their expansion to Spencer and the Northwest Iowa Region. In addition to providing additional healthcare services to our region, this project will also bring a large economic impact with the creation of up to 50 new jobs, the repurposing of an existing building, and a large 2-phase capital investment expansion of approximately \$6.5M over the next 2-3 years.” said Curt Strouth, President/CEO of the Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation.

For more information on Community Health Center and to view employment opportunities visit chcfd.com.