

Press Release

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Roots Community Health Center Telehealth Expansion

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TL;DR: Roots Community Health Center's telehealth expansion will increase critical access to care for Oakland's Medi-Cal, low-income and uninsured populations.

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Roots Community Health Center Expands Telehealth to Serve Vulnerable Patients During COVID-19

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA — As COVID-19 continues to impact access to health care in the Bay Area and throughout the state, Roots Community Health Center announced today the critical expansion of its telehealth services for Oakland's Medi-Cal, low-income and uninsured populations. Through video visits, telemedicine and other technology-enabled services — funded in part by a \$123,000 grant from Health Net, LLC — Roots will increase access to quality care for the 10,287 patients served in the Bay Area.

When shelter-in-place orders took hold in March, Roots rapidly activated telehealth services to scale from **serving 0% of its patients with telehealth to now conducting 60%-70% of visits virtually**. With the support of partners like Health Net, Roots is now further expanding the availability of this service by purchasing telehealth software and hardware, training staff, obtaining new equipment for patients — and most importantly — conducting outreach to ensure services reach those who need it most.

With recent data demonstrating the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Roots' patient population, the expansion of telehealth services ensuring access to vital care while following social distancing guidelines could not be more critical.

“Roots Community Health Center was started out of the recognition that providing quality care, in a place and time that puts patients first has a powerful ability to drive positive outcomes. Thanks to Health Net's generous grant, optimizing access to our community via telehealth will enable us to conduct many more screenings, adult chronic care management, pediatric well-child visits, prenatal care, substance use treatment, comprehensive case management and therapeutic sessions in a safe environment for both clinician and patient. These funds will be used to amplify current efforts to build-out and scale telehealth services organization-wide,” **said Dr. Kenji Taylor, Director of Clinical Programs at Roots Community Health Center.**

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For the last decade, Roots has been dedicated to serving patients impacted by systemic inequities. Now operating at 10 different locations throughout the East Bay, the clinics provide culturally appropriate and community-responsive services. Meeting patients where they are is not new for Roots, where the priority is helping underserved patients navigate the care system and address medical needs proactively. Programs like Oakland STOMP™ (Street Team Outreach Medical Program) and the Dream Youth Clinic do just that and the establishment and expansion of Roots' telehealth services are an extension of this model of care.

“Roots has long been a valued member of our community, helping our neighbors with everything from health care and parenting to job readiness. I’m grateful to see their work supported by partners like Health Net,” **said Libby Schaaf, Mayor of Oakland.** “With their help, more patients will be able to get the appointments, care and vital services they can’t afford to miss, especially as we continue to combat COVID-19.”

Health Net is the largest and most-experienced Medi-Cal plan in California. In May 2020, Health Net announced it awarded 138 grants, totaling \$13.4 million, to support the establishment and expansion of telehealth and telephonic services for California providers serving Medi-Cal members. This was the largest grant of cash dedicated to this cause by a health plan in California at the time.

“Resources like telehealth have a unique ability to reduce barriers to care and are crucial to keeping Californians healthy throughout this pandemic,” **said Brian Ternan, President and CEO of Health Net of California and California Health and Wellness.** “Community-based providers like Roots care for some of our state’s most vulnerable patients and have a proven track record of doing so compassionately and effectively. Their mission is one shared by Health Net and we are proud to provide them with the resources needed to leverage technology like telehealth to increase access for those at the greatest risk during this time.”

Founded in Oakland, California, the mission of Roots Community Health Center is to uplift those impacted by systemic inequities and poverty. We accomplish this through medical and behavioral health care, health navigation, workforce enterprises, housing, outreach, and advocacy.

We envision a United States where all communities of African descent are resilient, healthy, self-sufficient, and self-determined. We are proudly serving the greater Bay Area.