

8 Reasons CCBHCs Are the Future of Behavioral Health Care

The Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) is a growing care model that offers creative solutions with documented results to meet the challenges facing behavioral health care organizations across the nation.

Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC) are making significant headway toward access to equitable, high-quality behavioral health care that's sustainable.

As the CCBHC model of care continues to gain traction, The Joint Commission shares eight key ways these clinics are changing the landscape of behavioral health care delivery for the better.



1. Improved access to care

CCBHC certification requires a comprehensive array of services to be accessible to patients. The structure of the CCBHC model allows clinics to break through old limitations and deliver care outside the four walls of the clinic, meeting patients with mobile units, in schools and in other unconventional places.

On average, clinics with certified CCBHC status see a 25% increase in the number of patients they are able to serve.

CCBHC clinics improve access for their patients in the following ways:

- Elimination of waitlists
- Same-day access to care
- Expanded scope of patient services
- Locations outside the clinic building



2. New service lines

In addition to improved access, the **increased array of services** CCBHCs provide further elevates the quality of patient care by broadening the scope of services.

CCBHC standards include patient access to:

- 24/7 crisis services
- Substance use disorder treatment
- Peer support
- Psychiatric rehabilitation services



3. Chronic health management

Long-term mental well-being goes beyond crisis stabilization and has a bidirectional relationship with physical health.

Another hallmark of the CCBHC model is integrative, whole-person care. Addressing chronic behavioral health and physical conditions is foundational to this concept and improves the quality of life for the individuals served.

CCBHCs provide or coordinate access to primary health screenings and connections to providers who specialize in disease prevention and management.



4. Increased hiring and retention

A recent report from the Kaiser Family¹ Foundation identified that almost half of the nation's population lives in an area with a behavioral health workforce shortage. Low reimbursement rates reinforce the issue making it difficult for clinics to compensate staff. While CCBHCs usually add staff as they expand to meet the CCBHC requirements, improving funding tied to the CCBHC model can allow them to **leverage grant funds or expanded reimbursement** to help attract and retain staff.



5. Redesigned care teams

CCBHCs put the focus on what matters most: the individuals they serve. The payment structure for the majority of CCBHCs, Medicaid, has recently evolved to allow for flexibility in service delivery. As a result, clinics can redesign care teams to meet the needs of their populations.



6. Improved community partnerships

Collaboration between community partners is the engine that makes comprehensive care run. Because the CCBHC model encourages care outside the traditional clinic setting, it encourages providers to develop deep partnerships with other entities that serve the same individuals. **Many clinics seeking CCBHC certification establish formal agreements with Designated Collaborating Organizations (DCOs)** to provide services they do not directly administer. These partnerships enable CCBHC to become "one-stop shops" for individuals in the community.

Some examples of typical organizations CCBHCs partner with:

- Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and rural health clinics
- Inpatient psychiatry and acute care hospitals
- Residential behavioral health programs
- Social service providers, such as child welfare agencies
- Emergency medical service providers



7. Fewer hospitalizations and lower emergency room utilization

One key indicator of improved client outcomes is **the reduction of hospitalizations and emergency room visits.**

CCBHCs directly impact this measure by not only providing quality care, but also by bringing more individuals into integrative care, which addresses previously unmet needs. Other successful strategies within the CCBHC model include a focus on transitions between care providers, as well as access to crisis centers and urgent care services.



8. Improved physical health for individuals

CCBHC standards include data and reporting requirements, which hold clinics accountable for improving health outcomes of the population(s) they serve.

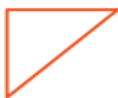
The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provides criteria² for physical health monitoring within CCBHCs in a minimum of five areas:

- Adult Body Mass Index (BMI) screening and follow-up
- Weight assessment, nutritional and physical activity counseling
- Tobacco use screening and cessation intervention
- Alcohol use screening and brief counseling
- Diabetes screening for patients living with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder who use antipsychotic medications

Trends in CCBHC³ data demonstrate **Improvements in physical health indicators** for patient under this model of care, which point to improved quality of life.

² Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. "Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs): Clarification to Criteria and Guidance." Section 223 of the Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014 (H.R. 4302). U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Accessed August 9, 2023. https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/ccbhc-state-questions-clarifications.pdf.

³ Mathematica. "Implementation and Impacts of the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic Demonstration: Findings from the National Evaluation." The Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE). U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, November 2022. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/60f121a777e63b20008e43ad45518bf/ccbhc-implementation-impacts-findings.pdf>.



Meeting CCBHC Requirements

The Joint Commission now offers accreditation for CCBHC services effective July 1, 2023. These new accreditation standards are aligned with the SAMHSA requirements to provides a strong framework for organizations to build a successful CCBHC program while supporting safe, high-quality care, treatment and services.