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FEATURED

River Valley Family Health Center leads in quality; feds award it 'gold' status, grant

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River Valley Family Health Center's Montrose location. The federally qualified health center recently became one of only three in the state to be deemed a quality leader by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

(Montrose Daily Press file photo)

A local clinic is one of only three in the state to achieve “gold” status in health center for continued quality.

River Valley Family Health Center, a federally qualified health center, was awarded \$34,515 for achieving best overall clinical performance among such health centers. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, through the Health Resources and Services Administration recognized River Valley as a health center quality leader.

The grant money, with other funding awards, will be put right back into increasing patient access and care, CEO Jeremy Carroll said.

“The big thing I want our community to realize is there were only three Colorado federally qualified health centers that received gold status this year,” he said. The designation means the clinic, with offices in Olathe, Delta and Montrose, is in the Top 10 of all quality metrics across the nation, among about 1,500 federally qualified health centers. It is also the fourth time River Valley has achieved gold status.

The other Colorado clinics to attain gold status are the Uncompahgre Medical Center on the West End and Sunrise Community Health.

“We have a community health center that is one of the top 10% across the nation. That’s pretty amazing that, in Olathe, Montrose and Delta, that our communities can really know that River Valley provides that kind of quality care,” Carroll said.

The metric applies to medical, mental health, dental care and substance abuse treatment services at River Valley.

“I’m very proud of our organization and really proud of our clinical staff who made it happen and absolutely care about (preventive care). Our staff really do an amazing job,” he said.

River Valley began in Olathe, expanding to satellite offices in Montrose and Delta. Now, a new, larger clinic, complete with an onsite compounding pharmacy with a drive-up service is in Montrose.

The extra room and service is necessary, as the clinic continues to grow, because it is seeing more and more patients.

“We grew by over 7% last year and by 40% over the last few years, so that is significant growth,” Carroll said.

River Valley accordingly received \$23,000 in access enhancer grant funds, making it one of five in the state to be awarded that funding.

River Valley further received a \$17,250 health disparities reducer grant, an award that recognized it as having met or exceeded federal goals, or having made at least a 10% improvement across different racial and ethnic groups between 2018 and 2019. Again, River Valley was among only five federally qualified clinics in the state to receive such funding.

Additional awards went to River Valley for advancing health information technology (\$8,250) and patient-centered medical home recognition (\$40,000), the latter of which was given earlier this year. Eighteen other federally qualified health centers in Colorado also received these awards.

Advancing health information technology entails patient engagement, interoperability of systems and collection of social determinants to health, in order to increase access to care.

Being recognized as a patient-centric medical home was “a huge piece for us this year,” said Carroll.

River Valley sees patients of all income levels, both with and without insurance, including Medicaid and Medicare, and offers a sliding-fee scale. Its awards will be poured into ongoing efforts to increase quality of care, such as technology to assist patients needing chronic care management and potentially adding more registered nurses for that purpose.

“There are a lot of different potential uses for this money. It hasn’t been finalized yet, but every penny of this money will be focused on improving the quality and care we provide our patients.” Carroll said.

River Valley has added two more medical providers to its roster, as well as another behavioral health provider. One more medical provider is expected to arrive in October.

“Our goal is to provide access when the patient needs it,” said Carroll. “Having those additional providers is going to be really huge for providing that access to our community.”

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