

2024 CAROLYN BOONE LEWIS EQUITY OF CARE AWARD WINNER (Emerging)

Augusta Health | Fishersville, Va.

Overview

Augusta Health was awarded the 2024 Carolyn Boone Lewis Equity of Care Award in the Emerging category. Hospitals in the Emerging category are recognized for leveraging AHA's Health Equity Roadmap to dismantle structural barriers in the communities they serve. Augusta Health is dedicated to providing high-quality health care services to its communities, with a strong emphasis on culturally responsive care and eliminating health disparities.

**Neighborhood Clinic
(previously Mobile Clinic)**

In September 2022, Augusta Health launched a neighborhood clinic with the goal of expanding access to comprehensive primary care services for communities dealing with sustained hardship. By leveraging geospatial analytics, the clinic team identified neighborhoods with limited primary care access and directed its outreach efforts to these areas.

The neighborhood clinic model relies on a community partner in each neighborhood to serve as a chaperone and provide a space for the clinic to operate. The clinic team currently visits 13 sites each month, including churches, community centers, homeless shelters and an LGBTQ+ center. The services offered vary based on the needs of the local community. For example, in neighborhoods with a significant elderly population, the clinic collaborates with a mental health non-profit organization to screen for isolation

and facilitate group support sessions addressing loneliness.

Infant and Maternal Health Navigator Position

Recognizing the need to lower infant mortality and close maternal health disparity gaps, Augusta Health established an infant and maternal health navigator position in 2022. The nurse maternal health navigator supports high-risk pregnant women, with a partic-

ular focus on teenagers, women with substance use disorders, incarcerated women, and those with fetal anomalies or adoption plans. Referrals are received from doctors' offices, the maternity unit, and other health care providers, or through word of mouth.

In January 2023, the navigator established a relationship with the local jail, meeting with pregnant women during incarceration and offering support both during and after their release. This partnership also included creating an equitable photography program,

allowing incarcerated women to document their motherhood journey. By capturing tender moments through photography, the program has enabled mothers to maintain strong emotional bonds with their children, which is essential for their mental well-being and the healthy development of their babies. In 2023, the neighborhood clinic program served 150 pregnant women and new mothers.

The navigator connects participants to various community resources, including education, clothing,



Roxanne Harris, MSN, RN, IBCLC, Infant and Maternal Health Navigator at Augusta Health Community Outreach and Partnerships, enjoys looking at photos with an expectant mother at a Neighborhood Clinic.

food, transportation, workforce development, car seats, safe sleep equipment, lactation support and sustainable hygiene products. The program's success was recognized at the Virginia Neonatal Perinatal Collaborative (VNPC) Summit, where the Augusta Health infant and maternal health navigator received the VNPC Community Recognition Award for 2023.

Future Goals

Augusta Health remains deeply committed to expanding initiatives that ensure culturally appropriate, person-centered care. Future goals include expanding the mobile clinic to additional communities and increasing the range of preventive, acute and chronic disease management services offered, based upon community needs.

Strengthening collaborative partnerships with local community organizations will be crucial to effectively support high-risk populations, such as LGBTQ+ patients, who face significant barriers to accessing quality health care. Through these comprehensive,



A grateful patient chooses to seek medical attention and guidance at the Neighborhood Clinic to manage his diabetes.

equity-focused actions, Augusta Health aims to set itself apart as a leader for inclusive and compassionate health care services through its focus on eliminating health disparities and promoting holistic well-being for all the patients, families and communities it serves.