

What Is a Community Health Center—and Why It Matters

A Message from Mikki Hand, CEO of Frontera Healthcare

When people hear *Community Health Center* (CHC), they often think of a clinic that provides medical care. While that's true, CHCs are so much more. They are **community-based organizations focused on the overall health of the people they serve**. We look beyond symptoms to understand what impacts health—mental well-being, preventive care, chronic disease management, and access to resources.

CHCs work closely with local stakeholders—elected officials, hospitals, physician groups, mental health authorities, and public health departments—to address health needs at the community level. This collaboration ensures that care is **coordinated, comprehensive, and responsive** to real-life challenges.

The National Role of CHCs

According to the **National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC)**, CHCs are the backbone of America's primary care system. For nearly 60 years, they have provided **comprehensive, high-quality, and cost-effective care** to millions of people across the country. Today, CHCs serve **1 in 10 Americans**, delivering primary and preventive care, managing chronic conditions, and integrating behavioral health services—all while reducing hospitalizations and healthcare costs.

NACHC emphasizes that CHCs are **community-governed organizations** that respond to local needs and innovate to close gaps in care. They lead efforts in **value-based care**, integrate social and clinical services, and act as first responders during public health emergencies. Their model of **team-based care**—including physicians, advanced practice providers, behavioral health specialists, and community health workers—promotes health beyond the exam room, preventing illness and improving outcomes.

What We Do at Frontera

At Frontera Community Health Center, we provide **whole-person care** under one roof:

Primary Care

- Chronic condition management: Hypertension, diabetes, hypothyroidism, obesity.
- Acute care: Flu, sinus infections, urinary tract infections.

Women's Health

- Well-woman exams.
- Cervical cancer screening.
- Breast cancer screening.

Preventive Care

- Well-child exams and adult physicals.
- Cancer screenings: Colorectal, breast, cervical.
- Depression, anxiety, and dementia screenings—because early detection saves lives.

Behavioral Health

- In-house counseling for stress, trauma, anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder.
- In-house psychiatry for medication management and mental health support.

We truly **meet patients where they are**, whether that means addressing transportation barriers, offering flexible scheduling, or providing integrated behavioral health services.

Why I Love This Work

As both a CEO and a nurse practitioner, I see firsthand the difference this model makes. I love working for a Community Health Center because it's not just about treating illness—it's about **building healthier communities**. We listen, we collaborate, and we act together. Every day, I'm reminded that healthcare is deeply personal, and when we care for the whole person, we change lives.

At Frontera, our mission is simple: **care for the whole person and the whole community**. That's why we work every day to keep our community healthy—body, mind, and spirit.

Your Health. Your Community. Our Mission.