

Yuma District Hospital and Clinics

BEST PRACTICES

Capacity Building

Determining Evaluation Methods and Measures

ISSUE FOCUS

Diabetes, Hypertension and Obesity

Lack of Exercise

Park and Recreational Facility

Background

Yuma, Colorado, is a rural county 125 miles east of Denver, bordering Nebraska and Kansas. Adjacent to Yuma is Washington County, Colorado, a similar rural space with a population of about 4,500 and high rates of chronic illnesses and poverty.

Yuma District Hospital and Clinic (YDHC) is one of two hospitals in the county and opened in 2007. YDHC is a 22-bed **Critical Access Hospital** (a category of ACA-certified Medicaid hospitals that provide cost-base reimbursements) and serves roughly 7,000 people from Yuma and Washington counties. Services offered at YDHC include inpatient care, surgical care, a 24-hour emergency room, diagnostic imaging, a laboratory, rehabilitation services, swing bed care and home health care. There are two provider-based rural health clinics affiliated with YDHC, one of which is located within its main facility.

Community Challenge

The community faces serious health risks as described in Table 1. Eighty percent of Yuma's population is obese or overweight, and 33 percent does not exercise. According

Demographics	Yuma County	Colorado
Population	10,093	5,119,219
Population Density (persons per square mile)	4.26 (2,368 mi ²)	49.18 (104,185 mi ²)
Non-Hispanic White	78%	70%
Latino/Hispanic	21%	21%
Median income	\$44,308	\$58,433
Health Stats	Yuma County	Colorado
Overweight or Obese	80%	59%
Does not exercise	33%	17%

TABLE 1: Yuma County Statistics

to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (2000-2006), obesity and limited access to fruits and vegetables (affecting 89.5 percent of the population) are major risk factors for premature death in the county. Similarly, participation rates in youth sports and recreation activities in Yuma are declining while childhood obesity is increasing.

Solution

CAPACITY BUILDING

In 2010, YDHC's leadership learned that its patients' overall satisfaction was disappointingly low at 54.3 percent. Around this time, YDHC recognized the opportunity to convert to a Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH), thereby improving population health, individual care and lowering costs. The **Colorado Community Health Network** selected YDHC to take part in a five-year demonstration project to successfully adopt the PCMH model.

YDHC now has three provider teams, two patient navigators, and by 2013 had improved its patient satisfaction to 74.4 percent. YDHC now participates in a regional care collaborative organization (RCCO) contract, which is similar to an Accountable Care Organization (ACO) but is part of Colorado's Medicaid Accountable Care Collaborative. The RCCO works to analyze data, maintain consistency among Medicaid providers, increase provider participation and provide support services like housing, food and transportation.

In terms of data collection and inquiry, YDHC is in a special position as a rural hospital. As one of only two hospitals in the county, YDHC can actually ascertain its community's health through the County Health Needs Assessment. In 2009, a Health Needs Assessment identified some of the biggest health problems in Yuma: poverty, obesity, lack of accessibility to healthy foods, lack of physical activity and related chronic diseases. In 2012, YDHC partnered with the **Colorado Rural Health Center** to write another Community Health Needs Assessment, develop a strategy to improve community health and create a presentation to disseminate the information. YDHC is keen on building its capacity to collect and analyze data.

DEVELOPING A PLAN

Beginning in 2012, YDHC's Board of Trustees, led by Polly Vincent and CEO John Gardner, developed a plan to reduce obesity and related chronic illnesses. Their plan revolved around developing a park adjacent to YDHC that would be accessible to the entire community and that would increase physical activity and social cohesion. This was feasible because YDHC owned the land on which its facilities are located as well as the adjacent acres. The idea to make this land into a park was spurred by Gardner's visit to Europe. In Europe, he was inspired by exercise stations in public parks and returned to Yuma with a challenge to Polly and YDHC's board: to make a health park at YDHC.

To determine what the park would look like and to confirm its feasibility, YDHC's CEO and Board partnered with the **Colorado Center for Community Development** at the College of Architecture and Planning within the University of Colorado Denver. They created a preliminary plan for a multigenerational park master plan. The plan was free because it provided the students with practicum work to build their portfolios. Meanwhile, Polly took classes on grant writing, applied for grants and met with foundations to present the plan.

Outcomes

IMPLEMENTATION

In 2013, the Colorado Health Foundation awarded YDHC with \$273,365 to create a health park. YDHC leveraged funding through community donations and by cultivating strong partnerships. The Colorado Center for Community Development worked with YDHC to develop a **Final Master Plan for Life Trails at Yuma District Hospital**, and construction began quickly. The **Life Trails Health Park** opened on May 11, 2014.

The Master Plan includes the following features and incorporates their expenses into the budget:

- Walking trails
- Two gathering areas
- Fitness stations with roofs for elderly and active adults

YUMA COUNTY, COLORADO

CLINICAL-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION CASE EXAMPLES

- Fitness stations for all-ages
- Central gathering area: shade-sail, picnic tables and fitness station hub
- Wheelchair accessible throughout including ramp to gathering area
- Picnic tables
- Bike racks
- Walking trails
- Art space
- Trees and shrubs
- Vegetable garden area: raised planters, some wheelchair accessible
- Sustainable features including earthwork, irrigation and drainage

The plans to increase *patient-usage* include:

- Practitioners prescribing weekly fitness routines and walks
- Physical therapists and occupational therapists bringing their patients to the park for therapy
- The nutritionist bringing patients to gardens
- Doctors want an obstacle course to measure children's progress
- Patient-navigators helping patients learn to use machines and answer any questions

The health park is open to the public 24/7 to impact the entire community, not just the patient population. YDHC and the park are located within walking distance of schools, a day care center, churches, stores and residential areas. Also within walking distance is an elderly housing development whose residents often utilize the YDHC's cafeteria for meals. One goal of the park is to increase the pedestrian connectivity to and from these locations.

There is currently solar lighting to allow people to use the park in the evening, but the park's wish list includes more lighting to extend its usability. The plans to increase *community engagement* include:

- Events where residents at the neighboring elderly housing development visit the park
- Events where elderly residents visit at the same time as day-care center visits to create informal "grandparent" relationships
- Elementary school visits with "to do" check-lists to increase physical activity
- Weekly community gatherings for nursing home and assisted living patients

PARTNERSHIPS

Given the rural nature of Yuma, where there are fewer opportunities for partnerships, YDHC has managed to cultivate relationships with local leaders and agencies as well as statewide organizations and national companies. In addition to the partners below, other local organizations plan to be involved in the park and encourage community participation.

- University of Colorado, Denver Architecture Department: Colorado Center for Community Development
- Live Well Colorado will help teach individuals and families how to cook and eat healthily by using the gardens
- Children's Place Structure and NEOS are providing exercise equipment
- Colorado Rural Health Center
- City Manager of the City of Yuma
- Improving Communication and Readmission (iCARE) are developing a statewide health improvement program

DETERMINING MEASURES OF SUCCESS AND EVALUATIVE METHODS

YDHC plans to evaluate the park's success in a few ways. First they have committed to four measurable results created by the Colorado Health Foundation:

1. Increased number of children and adults who engage in moderate or vigorous physical activity.
2. Increased number of children and adults who eat adequate amounts of fruits and vegetables daily.
3. Increased number of under-served Coloradans who have convenient access to recreational exercise and fruits and vegetables.
4. Increased number of Coloradans who are educated about chronic disease management.

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CLINICAL-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION CASE EXAMPLES

While these are short-term evaluative strategies, there are also a number of indicators YDHC will choose to measure in the upcoming year and will decide which types of information are most effective at showing positive health changes. The data in the Electronic Health Record (EHR) system is consistent with the Community Health Needs Assessment, and YDHC will follow these trends, hoping that the park will result in a reduction in morbidity and better maintenance of chronic illnesses. YDHC will also be recording attendance rates and numbers for patient-based and community-based events.

As written in the Master Plan, the goal of the park is “to promote intergenerational use, but especially to provide services to the young, the elderly, the obese and residents suffering from chronic diseases like high blood pressure, stroke and diabetes.” The Master Plan also states that the park “will increase the number of underserved citizens in Yuma, Colorado, with access to moderate physical and vigorous exercise not now available.” This goal seems achievable and feasible given that practitioners are in direct contact with so many of the community members, and patient navigators are promoting use of the park and follow-up care.

One challenge YDHC is facing is that it is finding it hard to capture data addressing park usage since so much of the activity takes place after business hours. However, to mediate this, thanks to the support of the YDHC Foundation, YDHC signed up to offer the **Weigh and Win Program**. The hope is that that by bringing this program to the park, YDHC will be able to capture more meaningful data that links health outcomes of community members to park utilization.

SUSTAINABILITY AND THE FUTURE

The staff and board have made some systems changes to ensure the sustainability of the park. In this case, systems changes come in the form of staff members integrating the park into their work routines and responsibilities. Having already built capacity by hiring patient navigators and incorporating EHR systems, YDHC was well positioned to make these internal changes.

Goal Attainment and Park Utilization:

- As of August 2015, YDHC’s patient navigators have worked hard to encourage monitored patients to use the park. They are also available to assist non-patients who have questions about the fitness equipment.
- YDHC has organized morning and evening walking groups.
- The rehabilitation staff has developed park exercise guides to assist their cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation patients and to monitor their patients’ improvements based on their use of these guides.

Maintenance:

- YDHC’s maintenance team is caring for the park as part of its weekly work routine.
- The Board has organized volunteer groups to help with the park maintenance. For instance, one day the tumbleweeds became a physical barrier to the park’s visitors, so the Board gathered a group of volunteers and fixed the problem in a day.
- A local gardening group will work with the community and the new garden beds to increase access to healthy food education and healthy food access.
- Local community advocacy and support help make the park sustainable and well maintained. Leadership of YDHC and its Board are supportive and committed to these changes, giving their time and expertise, and connecting to pro-bono work and grants. This front-end work allowed for the park to be built and for the wider community to benefit.

Within the region, the park has become known as a success, pointing to YDHC’s future as an inspirational health institution. For instance, a mental health group, Centennial Mental Health Center, in Sterling, Colorado, has already reached out to YDHC to learn more about its process. The Center wants to turn a parking lot, which it shares with a bank, into a small-scale park with the bank as an investor. The Center recognizes



the limitations of medication as treatment and wants to change the built environment to increase physical activity and social engagement. YDHC's willingness to mentor this health center demonstrates an ability to participate in a learning network, which is an important element to clinical projects that address social determinants of health on the community level.

As for the Life Trails Health Park, it is still an ongoing project. The programming development as well as the implementation of fitness equipment is continuous, and the park will eventually include gardens, more fitness equipment and other amenities. In terms of political support, the new City Manager is leveraging the impact of the park by developing plans and securing funding for new bike and walking trails that will connect the health park to other city resources and destinations. YDHC's CEO, John Gardner, is excited to see how the park changes YDHC's relationship with the community and the community's understanding of health.

“The value of this park continues to grow. It is a great resource to the community as our members seek healthier lifestyles ... I would hope that the park is a disruptor of the traditional patient/healthcare provider relationship where the patient looks to us as a partner and resource for achieving health rather than just someone to reach out too when they are ill.” — John Gardner

Gardner's leadership and support for this project was essential to its development and the speed at which it was implemented. His commitment to the long-term goals exemplifies the attitude and dedication a clinical leader must have for these types of changes. The city is now participating in the **Healthy Eating, Active Living (HEAL) Cities and Towns campaign**, which provides training and technical assistance to help municipalities adopt policies that improve access to physical activity and healthy food in their communities.

As part of this campaign, Yuma City signed a **resolution** in 2014 in which its government recognized the park as an integral part of the overall HEAL program.

With the support of the City Manager and the City's additional commitment to healthy living, the park is increasingly becoming a long-term, permanent and sustainable community space.

The more support the park receives from the City government and other local organizations, the more relevant it will be to the community. Establishing evaluative measures to this iterative process of developing the park and park programming will help ensure the achievement of health goals and strengthen future financial support for the park.

Tools

- [Final Master Plan for Life Trails at Yuma District Hospital](#)
- [County Health Needs Assessment](#)
- [Life Trails at Yuma District Hospital](#)

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