

# VITAL SIGNS

## The Free Clinic Takes a New Name



After 46 years of serving some of the area's most vulnerable individuals under the banner The Free Medical Clinic of Greater Cleveland, more commonly called The Free Clinic, this well-known institution has officially changed its name. The new name is Circle Health Services, accented by the optional tagline, The People's Clinic.

According to Executive Director Danny Williams, the new name caps off a host of changes that have been taking place at the clinic since 2012, the most significant of which is the fact that the clinic was designated as a Federally Qualified Health Center in June of that year. Williams said the clinic's leadership actively pursued that status, conferred by the Health Resource Services Administration (HRSA), an arm of the Health and Human Services division of the federal government, in order to be able to deliver health care services to people with insurance in addition to those without, the population traditionally served by free clinics.

"The key to the decision to make the transition to a health center was the Affordable Care Act, which aspires to provide some form of health coverage to all Americans," said Williams. "If such a vision became reality, in theory there would be no need for free clinics for most of the population. Our board felt that the political health care environment was signaling the need for a change for the long-term good of both The Free Clinic and the people we serve."

Williams said that for the past three years the health center's board and staff have been engaged in building the necessary infrastructure to enable the fee for service approach to insurance-driven revenue. This included everything from installing an electronic medical

## Pardon Our Dust: Health Center Makeover to Start Soon

Now that The Free Clinic has a new name, it is about to undergo some renovations for a newer look and improved services. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the community health center oversight arm of the Health and Human Services division of the federal government, recently awarded the clinic a one million dollar grant for capital improvements.

Some of the changes will include an expanded pharmacy area, refurbished dental operatories, a new phone system, upgraded computer servers, outdoor electronic signage, replaced flooring and more. "This building has been well-used since it opened in 2002, so we are grateful to HRSA for this opportunity to make some changes that will improve our operations as well as our physical appearance," said Executive Director Danny Williams. He said that changes are already being made to the front desk in the lobby area of the health center, and other changes will progressively roll out as maintaining day to day functionality allows.

"We will also be changing signage so that our new name, Circle Health Services, will be visibly displayed for everyone to see and remember," he said. The goal is to have the renovations completed by the end of 2017. "We hope to minimize as much as possible inconvenience and disruptions to our patients and everyone else frequenting this facility."

# Executive Director Danny R. Williams Stepping Down at Year's End

After a decade of dedicated service, Danny R. Williams, JD, MNO, is stepping down from his post as executive director of The Free Medical Clinic of Greater Cleveland (now known as Circle Health Services) at the end of this year to assume leadership of the Eliza Bryant Village, a 120-year-old long-term care facility in Cleveland.



"Danny has capably led The Free Clinic through momentous transitions and challenges during his tenure here," said Debra Rex, president of the health center's Board of Trustees. "We are saddened that he is leaving us, but grateful for all he has done to help the organization evolve from its beginnings as a free-spirited drop-in clinic to a well-integrated Federally Qualified Health Center, Level 3 Patient-Centered Medical Home and accredited behavioral health resource. He has put this respected clinic on a forward-looking trajectory that will enable it to grow and improve, and I am confident that whoever takes over his role will readily be able to build on the solid foundation Danny has established."

Rex said that the board has named interim co-executive directors to guide the health center until a permanent successor has been identified. Dr. Farah Munir, the center's chief medical officer, and Dale Winsberg, the retired former COO of Beech Brook and longtime Cleveland Clinic administrator before that, will assume those responsibilities, effective at the beginning of 2017.

Williams will commence his new position as President and CEO of Eliza Bryant Village in January. "I am honored to have had the opportunity to work with an incredibly committed board and staff team during an unprecedented period in health care. I believe our newly named Circle Health Services is well positioned to be a valuable resource in this community well into the future." While leading a long-term care facility will be a new area of focus for Williams, he is enthusiastic about the challenge and sees a common thread. "I have a lot to learn over the coming months, but that was also true when I took on The Free Clinic role," he said. "I have been blessed to spend the bulk of my professional career working for organizations that promote health and inclusion and justice for vulnerable communities. A big part of my responsibility has been to help the broader community appreciate the importance of maintaining such organizations as strong and healthy entities so they can continue to do this important work. I look forward to using everything I have learned to continue those efforts at Eliza Bryant Village."

The Free Clinic has provided access to high quality, non-judgmental health care for more than 46 years. While the current state of health care may be somewhat uncertain, Williams believes Circle Health is up for the challenge. "This organization thrives on challenge. If there is a suggestion that a segment of our population will be left out, we have always found a way to respond to the need."

## Farewell, my friends

Muhammad Ali once said "Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth." If that's true, given the privileges and grace I have enjoyed during my life, I still have a great deal of back rent to pay. I am, however, grateful for my 10 years of service here at The Free Clinic, now known as Circle Health Services, which has at least allowed me to chip away at the debt.

Circle Health will serve nearly 8,000 patients by the end of this year. It will address the range of medical, dental and behavioral health needs of our patients using a patient-centered orientation, and applying state-of-the-art techniques designed to identify and treat conditions arising from exposure to trauma or violence, or resulting from substance abuse. Teens seeking family planning counseling, young adults engaged in high risk behaviors, and uninsured individuals from all walks of life will continue to find us a welcoming and affordable option. We will utilize a modern electronic health record system to maintain our data and to measure our progress. And, we will remain a strong advocacy voice speaking up for communities that don't always have the champions they deserve.

While I won't be at the helm working with my colleagues and friends to advance this mission, I am confident that the steps we've taken over the last 10 years have positioned Circle Health well to meet the unexpected challenges our communities will face in the years to come. Please continue to support the cause. Thank you for granting me the privilege to serve.

Peace Out.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Danny R. Williams".

# Health Center Awarded Victims of Crime Grant

Circle Health Services has been awarded a **\$427,000** Victims of Crime grant through the Ohio Attorney General's office. The funds support services to individuals experiencing the lingering effects of trauma caused by being a firsthand victim of a crime or witnessing episodes of crime such as domestic abuse, shootings or violence brought about by substance abuse issues.

This is the second round of funding the health center has received from the Attorney General's office; the first issued in early 2016 provided more than \$300,000 and was used to provide enhanced training for the center's behavioral health team and to build a "Relaxation Station," a specialized waiting room with imagery and lighting designed to acclimate clients awaiting trauma counseling appointments (pictured below).



"We have been fortunate to receive grants from the Ohio Attorney General's office that enable our mental health team members to be better equipped to help individuals experiencing the debilitating effects of physical or emotional trauma," said G. Buddy Bailey, PhD, director of the center's behavioral health department. He said the grant makes provision for low-income,

uninsured individuals to be able to receive these counseling services at no cost. He added that a recent review of the health center's behavioral health clients indicates that at least 25% of patients who have no health insurance are victims of crime.

"We believe that individuals already served by our health center are a representative microcosm of the community around us, likely populated by many people who have been hurt but have not sought help for many different reasons," said Bailey. "These grant dollars, provided by the Ohio Attorney General's office as part of a statewide effort to assist victims of violent crime, position us to help people with insurance plans as well as those who have no coverage and lack financial resources. We can offer the best possible care to help troubled individuals cope with the aftershocks of violence that reverberate through their lives. Sleeplessness, anxiety, depression, anger, PTSD, suicidal tendencies, panic attacks – these are some of the symptoms of trauma that can persist long after a violent episode," he said. "We want people to know that they can get help – they don't have to suffer alone."

*For more information about the health center's trauma counseling care, please call Circle Health Services at (216) 707-3406.*

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records system, to codifying policies and procedures, to establishing relationships with insurance payors, to learning and applying billing codes and so much more.

The remodeled business framework also meant changing the way patients are registered and managed by their medical, dental and/or mental health and substance abuse providers. "After more than four decades of caring for people with very few questions asked, suddenly we were asking patients about income, household size, insurance coverage – all of the questions a hospital or private physician's office would ask," said Williams. "For some of our longtime patients, this was disconcerting. For new patients it was downright confusing. Why does a free clinic need to be asking

about these personal matters? We knew it was time for a change so that our name is more compatible with our new health center approach to delivering care."

The Circle Health Services name was arrived at after many months of formal and informal surveys of Free Clinic stakeholders and interested parties. Williams said that funders, patients, volunteers, staff, event participants and just about anyone else whose path he crossed were asked to weigh in with suggestions for a new name. Then the list was progressively whittled down to just two. Those two names, at the recommendation of branding expert Jean Gianfagna, were put together to create Circle Health Services, The People's Clinic.

Debra Rex, president of Circle Health Services' Board of Trustees, said most people vested in the renaming of The Free Clinic have been happy with this choice. "The circle is an ancient symbol of inclusiveness, a principle central to The Free Clinic's value system. And it also implies a connection to the University Circle neighborhood where we are located," she said. "And of course The People's Clinic is a place that anyone and everyone who needs it can turn to for care."

She said, "This has been a long and painstaking process, but I think the outcome is a good one and an important first step in launching the rebranding of the place we have known and loved as The Free Clinic."

# Health Center Earns Three-Year CARF Accreditation

At the end of October, Circle Health was notified that its behavioral health program had received a three-year renewal of its accreditation the Commission on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). This Accreditation, first earned three years ago, was awarded following submission of a detailed report on behavioral health activities provided at the health center and an onsite survey conducted by CARF representatives in late September. Three years is the longest period of accreditation awarded by CARF.



CARF is an international, nonprofit organization that promotes quality rehabilitation services by establishing standards for quality and surveying those organizations to assure the standards are being met.

"Services, personnel, and documentation clearly indicate an established pattern of conformance to standards."

A CARF Three-Year Accreditation was awarded to the health center (under its former Free Clinic name) for the following programs:

- Intensive Outpatient Treatment: Alcohol and Other Drugs/Addictions (Adults)
- Outpatient Treatment: Alcohol and Other Drugs/Addictions (Adults)
- Outpatient Treatment: Mental Health (Adults)
- Outpatient Treatment: Mental Health (Children and Adolescents)

"We are very pleased to be judged worthy of CARF Three-Year Accreditation once again," said G. Buddy Bailey, PhD, Director of Behavioral Health at Circle Health. "We work hard to ensure the highest possible quality of services to our clients, and this accreditation demonstrates that our care delivery and business practices hold up to outside expert scrutiny."

The mental health outpatient treatment for children and adolescents program represents an expansion of the center's accredited services; it was not included in the original CARF accreditation.

"This achievement is an indication of your organization's dedication and commitment to improving the quality of the lives of the person's served," said Brian J. Boon, PhD, President/CEO of CARF International, in the notification letter sent to the health center.

Charity Navigator congratulates The Free Medical Clinic of Greater Cleveland (Circle Health Services) on attaining a second consecutive coveted



4-star rating for demonstrating strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency.

## New Substance Use Disorder Screening Practices will Enhance Integrated Health Care

Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) is an evidence-based practice used to identify, reduce, and prevent problematic use, abuse, and dependence on alcohol and illicit drugs, and it is a new service that is being added to Circle Health's integrated care practices thanks to a grant from Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services (MHAS).

"SBIRT is an approach to screening and early intervention for substance use disorders and people at risk for developing substance use disorders that emphasizes a high level of cooperation and integration of our medical and behavioral health programs," said Dr. Farah Munir, chief medical officer of Circle Health Services. "We will be asking our medical patients a series of survey questions designed to elicit responses that are indicative of a potential substance abuse problem. If the outcome suggests that the patient may have a problem, then an evidence-based brief intervention is performed and high risk patients are encouraged to seek treatment services available here or elsewhere," she explained.

use disorders and other chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular conditions, and asthma make positive behavioral changes to support better health.

Health center staff have received training to familiarize them with the survey tool and to learn a technique called "motivational interviewing," a clinical approach that helps people with mental health and substance

"Our health center earned Patient-Centered Medical Home Level III status almost a year ago in part because of our demonstrated achievements in quality health outcomes by enhancing coordination between our primary care and behavioral health services. SBIRT is a proven technique that refines and strengthens our ability to engage in the integration practices we are already committed to delivering," said Munir. "We are continually seeking ways to improve patient experiences through the use of culturally-sensitive, evidence-based clinical practices and we believe that SBIRT is one effective strategy to do just that."

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# Physician Returns to Neighborhood to Lead the Health Center's Medical Department

Lisa Allshouse Zapotocky first became acquainted with Cleveland 25 years ago when, after completing college and graduate studies, she came to work at CWRU as a Laboratory Assistant in the departments of Molecular Biology and Endocrinology. She was born in Willoughby, but grew up in Erie, PA. Today, she again finds herself in the University Circle neighborhood as Associate Medical Director of Circle Health Services, a position she began last December.



Lisa Allshouse Zapotocky

Zapotocky has worked as an internist/pediatrician for 18 years. Her internship and residency took place in Indianapolis, IN with a broad base of experiences, including adult and pediatric tertiary and primary care facilities, the local V.A. hospital and a volunteer stint at a neighborhood free medical clinic. She returned to Cleveland after completing her residency, and accepted a position at MetroHealth Medical Center at the local medicine/pediatrics Strongsville satellite clinic.

In 2013, Zapotocky moved to the East Side to manage some family responsibilities. It was then that she decided to make a career change, opting to work with a home physician service that introduced her to caring for homebound, disabled, geriatric and hospice patients. While hugely rewarding in terms of the clients she served, after doing this work for nine months, Zapotocky realized that she missed the collegial atmosphere of a clinic setting and decided to return to traditional outpatient medicine.

"I was drawn to The Free Clinic as a means of reclaiming my vocation of medicine; combining a strong foundation of primary care medicine with service and advocacy," she said. "I have been welcomed into this health center during a time of great transition; it is my privilege to be part of such

a mission-driven team. My tenure as associate medical director began in December 2015, and daily I continue to learn of the rich history and culture of what is now Circle Health Services. As we continue to grow as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) and Patient-Centered Medical Home, my goals are to practice-build our adult, pediatric and HIV clinics, improve clinic efficiency, foster mentorship, education and team building in the Medical department and assist in strengthening interdepartmental relationships. Most importantly, my goal is continue to strive for exceptional patient care and continue to advocate for all our patients, especially those who are most vulnerable."

When she is not seeing patients or engaged in administrative duties for the health center, Zapotocky enjoys time with family, music and communing with nature in a park or at a beach. And she dreams of someday finding time to reengage in gardening and photography, two hobbies she has relished in the past. She and her husband, George, reside in Mentor.

*Circle Health Services is accepting new patients. To schedule an appointment with Dr. Zapotocky or another primary care provider, please call (216) 707-3438.*

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# Circle Health Services

The People's Clinic<sup>†</sup>

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# Health Center Programs Can Prevent HIV Infection

Circle Health Services can help individuals avoid getting HIV with pre-exposure prophylaxis (HIV PrEP), which means taking a medication that can protect people from developing HIV should they have unprotected sex or share needles with someone who is HIV-positive. HIV PrEP medication is used by individuals who are HIV negative and are at high risk of HIV infection. The medication is in pill form and must be taken every day in order to build up sufficient levels in the body to prevent HIV infection. HIV PrEP taken daily can reduce HIV infections by 99%.

Circle Health also provides post-exposure prophylaxis (HIV PEP), which is taking a medicine within 72 hours of known or potential exposure to HIV to prevent the virus from developing. PEP has been standard procedure since 1996 for healthcare workers exposed to HIV. In 2005, the Centers for Disease Control concluded that it should also be made available for use after potential HIV exposure with high risk sexual encounters, after sharing equipment/needles to inject drugs, or

following a rape. The medication must be taken for 1 month to be completely effective. Circle Health currently receives funding from the AIDS Funding Collaborative to research and implement a best practice model.

These therapies can be costly, but health center staff can work with clients to connect with patient assistance programs to reduce those costs. "The cost of these before and after treatments is minimal when compared to the

cost of treating someone who is HIV positive," said Adriana Whelan, associate director of clinical services. "We are happy to be able to play an active role in preventing HIV infection for anyone who has any concern about his or her risks of contracting the virus."

*For more information or to schedule an appointment, call the health center's HIV Department at (216) 707-3430 or (216) 707-3452.*



[cleveland.bbb.org](http://cleveland.bbb.org)