

One Health Ohio Opens Center in Warren

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[By Dan O'Brien](#)

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio -- The head of One Health Ohio, formerly North East Ohio Health Systems Inc., says his organization put careful thought and planning on where to expand its footprint in the region.

After researching demographics, assessing the findings of focus groups and reviewing several sites, Dr. Ronald Dwinells said the most logical place to develop a new community health center is in the heart of an urban area where the need is greatest – in this case, southeast Warren.

“Our goal is to increase access and decrease barriers” to health care, said Dwinells, the CEO of One Health. “This location was ideal for us.”



Ronald Dwinells

Officials are to announce this morning the development of a new, fully staffed medical and dental center at 1977 Niles Road SE in Warren. The new center will include nine medical examination rooms and six dental exam rooms, which includes some of the latest digital intra-oral and panoramic X-ray equipment.

One Health intends to spend about \$900,000 at first to renovate 12,000 square feet of a 30,000-square-foot building that once housed the Trumbull Metropolitan Housing Authority, Dwinells said. Establishing a center here is vital so residents in the relatively poor neighborhoods could have access to affordable health care, he said.

“Our mission is to serve the uninsured and underinsured,” Dwinells said. Being in the heart of a public housing complex is essential to providing preventive health care to a population that was underserved, he noted.

One Health operates community health centers in Youngstown, Alliance and the west side of Warren. “The Warren-Youngstown area has a 13% unemployment rate, and we were being inundated with a high number of patients” either uninsured or underinsured, Dwinells said.

It was therefore critical that the organization expand its reach in the Mahoning Valley and establish a fourth location, he added.

Although just two miles from its other Warren site, Dwinells said the new site opens up an entirely new patient base that includes Niles and rural communities that extend all the way to Ashtabula. “Only 6% of the patients at our Warren site came from the southeast side,” he said.

Most likely, those patients without access to community health services were treated at area emergency rooms, which Dwinnells said ultimately drives up the cost of health care. "Our goal is to have multiple access sites" for preventive health services so trips to the emergency room are less frequent.

In all, the new Warren health center would target a population of about 30,000 and expect to treat some 3,000 to 5,000 patients its first year of operation, Dwinnells said.

More distant plans call for the addition of podiatry, Ob/Gyn, mental health, and hearing and speech services.

One Ohio received a federal grant of nearly \$900,000 from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to support the creation of the new health center.

Elizabeth Haddle, chief operating officer for One Health, said that the new community health center is not a free clinic, just as its other centers are not free: "As in the case with our other facilities, the center will accept Medicare, Medicaid and some private and commercial insurance plans. We also offer a sliding fee for the medically uninsured who qualify."

Some 40% of the patients treated at One Health's centers in the Mahoning Valley are uninsured, Dwinnells said, while about 95% are at 200% or below of the federal poverty guidelines.

In 1998, the organization logged 8,000 visits at its Youngstown office, then One Ohio's only site in the Valley, Dwinnells said. "In 2008, there were 65,000 visits or more" to the three sites, he reported.

"We have a pretty significant impact," Dwinnells stated.

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