



**For immediate release**

## **Carroll County Partners Receive \$4.38 Million Grant to Improve Access to Care**

Westminster, MD (August 27, 2026) - Carroll County has been awarded over \$4 million to strengthen and expand access to health care in Year 1 of Maryland's Rural Health Transformation Program. Funds will be used to implement the CHAIN-LINC - Carroll Health Access Integration Network - Local Initiative for Navigation and Care - which includes several innovative programs and connects Carroll County residents with a network of care and services to better meet their health needs.

The Carroll County Health Department coordinated the application, with several partner agencies contributing to the design and planning. Partners include Carroll Hospital, Access Carroll, Carroll County Department of Social Services, Carroll County Fire and EMS, Carroll County Government, Carroll County Youth Service Bureau, and the Westminster Rescue Mission.

"This is a tremendous achievement for the county; \$4.38 million was the largest award for a county health department. Only in Carroll County could we have pulled off such a successful application so quickly with the combined effort of so many community partners," said Carroll County Health Officer Dr. Matthew Levy. "This grant will help fill local gaps in medical, behavioral health, dental and nutritional care. It will also allow us to move towards prevention, improving the health and well-being of our residents and reducing the total cost of care. We are grateful for the support of our County Commissioners and look forward to working with our partners."

Projects include creating a Tri-Sector Integrated Health Hub at Access Carroll, an integrated care clinic for uninsured and underinsured Carroll County residents located in downtown Westminster. Grant funds will support additional healthcare providers and other staff in addition to equipment, increasing capacity for primary and dental care, behavioral health services, and telehealth. The Health Department and Department of Social Services will also have staff on-site, allowing patients to access support services such as WIC, health insurance, and SNAP at one location. New chronic disease and weight management programs will also be added to help patients prevent and manage chronic health conditions. An additional Hub is planned for western Carroll County in future years of the grant, if funding is available.

“At Access Carroll, we see firsthand the challenges that uninsured and underinsured residents face in accessing healthcare and support services,” said Melissa Zahn, BSN, RN, Executive Director & CEO of Access Carroll. “This investment through the Rural Health Transformation Program will allow us to establish the Tri-Sector Integrated Health Hub, a transformative model that brings healthcare, behavioral health, and social services together under one roof. By expanding access to many essential community resources in a single location, we can better address the whole person and remove barriers to care. The Tri-Sector Hub reflects the power of collaboration among healthcare providers, community organizations, and government partners to create a more connected, person-centered system that improves health outcomes and strengthens the well-being of Carroll County residents.”

"Bringing social services and health care under one roof at the Tri-Sector Integrated Health Hub will make it easier for Carroll County residents to access essential benefits like SNAP, WIC, and health insurance assistance and better connect families with the resources they need to thrive," said Vicky Kretzer, Director, Carroll County Department of Social Services.

Stephanie Halley, CEO of Westminster Rescue Mission, said “We are grateful to join our community partners in this significant effort to improve access to care in Carroll County. This investment will strengthen coordination across healthcare, behavioral health, and supportive services, allowing us to work together more effectively and provide more comprehensive, whole-person care for the individuals and families we serve.”

A new Wayfinder paramedicine program through Carroll County Fire and EMS will serve county residents with multiple emergency room or hospital visits over the last year. A trained community paramedic and care coordinator will visit patients in their homes, offer health assessments, and link them with services to meet both medical and non-medical needs. Program staff will also offer falls risk assessments and work to connect patients with health technology to support remote monitoring when possible.

“Carroll County’s Community Paramedicine program will provide proactive, in-home support that helps residents manage their health needs before they become emergencies. By partnering closely with the Health Department, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFEMS) can connect vulnerable community members to the appropriate services sooner, reducing 911 calls and strengthening the continuum of care across the county,” said Director and Chief

Michael Robinson. “DFEMS is proud to be collaborating on the Rural Health Grant, improving services for all residents.”

The third component of the project combines several behavioral health programs to strengthen both prevention and care for mental health and substance use issues. Key activities will focus on suicide prevention, screenings and referrals, and outreach and education including the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and safe medication and firearm storage. Several programs will focus on populations at higher risk, including the agricultural community, seniors, veterans, pregnant individuals, and children impacted by prenatal substance exposure.

“No single organization can meet our community’s needs alone, making this grant an incredible life-changing investment in the health and hope of Carroll County's families. We are deeply grateful to Dr. Levy and our dedicated partners for leading this effort, and CCYSB is proud to stand alongside them to expand vital behavioral health care for residents across every stage of life,” said Liza Guroff, President/CEO, Carroll County Youth Service Bureau.

“The strength of Carroll County has always been the way organizations come together to support the health and well-being of our community,” said Brian Cawley, president and chief operating officer of Carroll Hospital. “As the county's only hospital, we are proud to work alongside our partners on this important initiative. Together, we can create a more connected system of care, expand access to services and help people live healthier lives.”

The Carroll County Board of Commissioners shared this statement: “The Board of Commissioners congratulate the Carroll County Health Department and all the partners involved in the Rural Health Grant. Receiving 4.38 million dollars is a testament to the strong public–private collaborations in Carroll County. Carroll County is known for its cooperative approach to solving challenges, and this grant is yet another example of that commitment. Carroll County residents, the true beneficiaries of this funding, will gain improved access to care, enhancing their health and well-being while helping reduce the overall cost of care. Thank you to Dr. Matt Levy, the Health Department staff, and all local partners who worked diligently to submit a strong application and bring this award to fruition.”

In December 2025, Maryland was awarded \$168 million in federal funding for the program's first budget period to strengthen and modernize health care in the 18 state-designated rural areas, including Carroll County. Maryland’s Rural Health Transformation Program funding, which is renewable over five years, will enhance the state’s ongoing efforts to improve health care access and affordability in Maryland’s rural communities.

The Maryland Department of Health engaged with the state’s rural community members and organizations, including Carroll County residents, to inform the program proposal submission. The Rural Health Transformation Committee, which includes community members, and organizational representatives from Maryland’s rural areas, meets quarterly to inform the state’s rural health work . For more information about the program and the full list of grantees, visit [Maryland’s Rural Health Transformation Program webpage](#).

*The Maryland Rural Health Transformation Program is supported by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial*

*assistance award to the Maryland Department of Health totaling \$168,180,837.61 with 100 percent funded by CMS/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by CMS/HHS, or the U.S. Government.*

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