

Telling the Story of Public Health



Local Public Health Agencies Provide Exemplary Home Health Care

Although home health has not traditionally been included as a public health function, several local public health agencies in Missouri recognize the need to provide services in their local jurisdictions and are doing so in exemplary style. In fact, home health programs run by health departments in Montgomery and Johnson counties recently received national recognition.



These home health programs received the 2018 Patient Satisfaction Award of Distinction, based on an annual Home Health Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HHCAHPS) survey. The survey measures patient satisfaction with their home health agency. The HHCAHPS survey is provided to all home health patients covered by Medicare. Patients are asked how well their home health care provider communicated and discussed medicines, pain and home safety. They are also asked if care was provided in a professional way, how they would rate the agency overall, and how strongly they would recommend the home health agency to others.

Montgomery County and Johnson County programs placed in the top 25% of home health agencies in the nation by demonstrating what survey administrator Fazzi Associates calls “superior performance in overall patient satisfaction results.”

Fazzi says, “We are incredibly proud of these agencies’ significant accomplishments and pleased to be their partner in one of the most important quality initiatives—patient satisfaction.”

The Montgomery County Health Department Home Health Agency received the award for the fourth year in a row.

Administrator Linda Harman says, “We want to thank our patients for their vote of confidence in our employees, for taking the time to provide feedback, and for recognizing the Montgomery County Health Department Home Health Agency for meeting and exceeding their expectations.”

Montgomery County patients have vocalized their support for their local home health agency.

JoAnn says she’s used the Montgomery County Health Department’s Home Health program several times – for her mother’s B-12 injections, for her own wound care after breast cancer, and for rehab after a fall. She says doctors are surprised when she



Montgomery County home health nursing staff (L to R): Erin Hadden, RN; Kenna Fricke, RN; Laura Yelton, RN; Lindsey Janes,

specifically asks for the Health Department to provide home health care, but she feels thankful to have access to such a great local resource.

John says about his care after a stroke, "These women [home health nurses] were wonderful and did all they could to help me out with testing, medications, putting me in touch with other people I needed to contact and on and on . . . I want them to know how much I appreciated their efforts and time . . ."



And Sue thanks the home health staff for care and therapy they provided. "My 89th birthday is tomorrow. Thanks again for helping me to stay at home."

About 150 miles away, headquartered in Warrensburg, Missouri, Johnson County Community Health Services provides quality home health services to both Johnson and Lafayette Counties. They received Fazzi's national patient satisfaction award for the second consecutive year.

Raylene Ballenger, RN Director of Home Health Nursing at JCHS, says, "This award speaks to the high level of clinical and customer service our team gives on a daily basis. They truly care about their patients and work to serve them as if they were caring for their own family."

Montgomery County administrator Linda Harman echoes that sentiment, "Our home health staff provide exceptional, compassionate care, and love serving their friends and neighbors. Helping our patients live longer, healthier lives gives us great joy and satisfaction!"

Home Health Agencies provide professional, quality, compassionate home health care to patients who qualify and require a skilled service for acute phases of illness, not over the long-term. Skilled services may be provided by a Registered Nurse, Physical Therapist, Speech Therapist or Occupational Therapist. Services may include:

- Dressing changes and wound assessment
- Cardiac/pulmonary assessment
- Diet instruction
- Catheter care
- Post-operative pain management
- PICC line medication and management
- Rehabilitation services for speech, physical, or occupational therapy



Missouri residents of all ages may be eligible for home health services, and have the right to choose their own home health provider. Eligibility requirements may vary, but generally require that –

- A patient must have insurance coverage with Medicare, Medicaid or private insurance.
- A patient must be physically unable to leave their home.
- A physician must order a skilled service and must hold a face-to-face meeting and assessment with the patient up to 90 days before care is to begin.

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services also assures that home health care meets acceptable standards as outlined in state and federal guidelines. It verifies staff training and credentials, reviews compliance with agency policies and procedures, and reviews patient medical records for care provided and outcomes.

Home health care meets the public health goals of increasing access to care, reducing health disparities, and better integrating health care with public health systems. It allows elderly and disabled adult patients to remain in their homes longer, and often with better outcomes. It also provides a strong return on investment.



Preliminary results of a comprehensive study to measure the ROI of home health care indicate that home health patients have lower 30-day readmission rate than those who do not receive home health care. Unadjusted data show a superior outcome after 12 months with patients who adhered to a home health care plan versus those who did not adhere. The adherent group achieved a 10% lower readmission rate and 5% lower mortality rate. The study also indicated that one year cost savings to Medicare was greater than the cost of the home health care. Data was presented at the 2018 ElevatingHOME National Leadership Conference by representatives from Excel Health Group, KNG Health Consultants and ElevatingHOME, who state that further research is needed, but emphasize that home health delivers value.

Local public health agencies that provide home health services agree.

“We work closely with the patient’s physician and other care partners to provide the best possible care, which helps to reduce adverse events and costs following hospital discharge,” says Scott Alvested, community outreach coordinator for Johnson County Community Health Services. “The mission of public health is to prevent, promote, and protect the health of our communities. This includes improving the quality of life of those in our communities; home health care plays a vital role in that mission.”

To learn more about home health services in Johnson and Lafayette Counties, visit johnsoncountyhealth.org. To learn more about Montgomery County’s home health program, visit montgomerycountyhealth.org.

The #HealthierMO initiative is seeking more stories like this one that demonstrate how partners in Missouri’s greater public health system are working together to transform the future of public health in our state and offer every resident the opportunity for a healthier life. If you have a story to share, message us on Facebook @HealthierMO or email Communications Coordinator Jaci McReynolds at jmcreynolds@healthiermo.org. Learn more about the initiative and how you can get involved at HealthierMO.org, on Facebook @[HealthierMO](https://www.facebook.com/HealthierMO) or on Twitter @[aHealthierMO](https://twitter.com/aHealthierMO).