



June 2, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Union Community Health Center announces the creation of a Veterans Health Care Liaison dedicated to those who have served.

The new role will offer Veterans and those who have served in the military with tailored and dedicated healthcare care navigation services.

Bronx, NY —Today, thanks to a generous grant from the New York State Health Foundation (NYSHealth), Union Community Health Center (UNION) announced the creation of a new position specifically charged with coordinating Veterans health care services. *The Veterans Health Care Liaison* will be devoted to providing Veterans and those who have served in the military, with tailored and dedicated healthcare care navigation services, with the goal of increasing access to timely, quality, health care and support services within the Bronx.

The Veterans Health Care Liaison will work exclusively with those who have served in the military, engaging the Bronx VA, internal UNION personnel, and local community agencies to insure that Veterans obtain seamless care in a culturally competent manner.

“UNION is grateful to the New York State Health Foundation for recognizing the obstacles and barriers to care Veterans often face when trying to access healthcare or social services within the community, said Dr. Douglas York, Chief Executive Officer at UNION. “ Realizing the huge and inequitable gap Bronx Veterans faced when negotiating their care, UNION worked extensively to improve the aforementioned, which is directly correlated to the New York State Health Foundation’s goal of expanding choices and increasing access to comprehensive community-based services for Veterans. UNION is proud to be at the forefront of advocating for Veterans and those who have served.”

Veterans shouldn’t have to choose between quality and accessibility,” said Derek Coy, Veterans’ Health Officer at NYSHealth and former U.S. Marine. “UNION’s innovative approach will not only improve the health of veterans in the Bronx, but will also serve as a model for other health centers to replicate across the country.”

Beginning in 2016, UNION began sounding the alarm and took a lead role in providing congressional representatives data and written testimony regarding the difficulties experienced by Bronx Veterans attempting to access health care in their communities.

Subsequently, UNION’s proposed language was included in the *Mission Act*, which was signed into legislation last summer, and makes dramatic improvements to how Veterans receive community care—health care provided outside of VA. *The Mission Act* gives Veterans greater choice over their health care, allowing Veterans to access select services in Federally Qualified Health Centers

(FQHCs) without prior approval. UNION is also the only Bronx FQHC approved to provide Veterans Urgent Care Services. All of this has opened up greater access to health care for Veterans during a time when COVID-19 has increased their needs, and yet limited their ability to travel outside of their neighborhoods.

“UNION has worked tirelessly to ensure access to health care services earned and deserved by our military Veterans. UNION’s focus on helping Veterans navigate the health care system has made them a role model for other health centers across the country,” said Gina Capra, Vice President at the National Association of Community Health Centers. “Nationally, Community Health Centers serve over 385,000 Veterans a year, proving that health centers are a key partner in caring for Veterans along with the US Department of Veterans Affairs.”

In addition, UNION has taken a leadership role with the Community Healthcare Association of NYS (CHCANYS) to improve data collection and service needs for Veterans throughout NYS. With this grant award, UNION is ready to launch a comprehensive Veterans outreach and engagement effort to improve the connection of Veterans to healthcare.

“CHCANYS’s vision is that every New York State community has primary care that encompasses all aspects of each patient’s health and well-being. UNION’s work with veterans helps us make that vision a reality each day, and we are proud that their work is being recognized with this grant from the New York State Health Foundation,” said Rose Duhan, CHCANYS President and CEO. “Veterans face very specific health care challenges, and providing them with the ability to work with a dedicated liaison helps ensure all of their needs will be met.”

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About Union Community Health Center

Union Community Health Center (UNION) is a 501(c)(3), Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), an NCQA recognized Level III Medical Home, licensed by NYS as an Article 28 facility authorizing the provision of care by hospitals and health centers. UNION’s mission is “to provide comprehensive, culturally competent primary and preventive health care services to improve the health status and decrease health disparities of the medically underserved populations in the Bronx, providing services to all regardless of age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or the ability to pay.” UNION cares for over 37,000 patients per year generating over 179,000 patient care visits. UNION operates 7 locations, including a mobile health unit, in the Bronx and is a longstanding, community-based health care provider, serving the Bronx for over 100 years.