



Valley-Wide Health Systems and Southeast Health Group Merge

[La Junta, December 22, 2022] – On December 15, the Board of Directors of both Valley-Wide Health Systems and Southeast Health Group (SHG) voted to merge the two entities in order to better serve clients.

This decision will have a profound impact on the integration of physical and mental health, and the overall idea of whole-person healthcare for the rural and frontier counties served in southeast and south-central Colorado.

In a combined statement from Dr. Jania Arnoldi, President/Chief Executive Officer of Valley-Wide, and Dr. JC Carrica, Chief Executive Officer of SHG outlined the benefits of this change:

“We have always worked closely to meet the needs of our communities, especially where our service areas overlap in the lower Arkansas Valley. Formally merging the companies will help both entities overcome workforce shortage, breakdown access to care barriers, create communication efficiencies across the many health care services we collectively provide, and focus more attention on innovation.”

Combining organizations of this size will take some time, but our goal is to complete the merger by June 30, 2023. Both Carrica and Arnoldi wanted it to be clear to their employees and the community that no layoffs will come as a result of this decision and that their dedicated employees are what will make this a successful transition.

“The opportunity to merge came at the right time,” Carrica said. “Southeast Health Group has emphasized the importance of treating mental health and physical health needs simultaneously for nearly a decade, but sustaining the service was very difficult because of reimbursement rates. As Valley-Wide continues to grow their integrated model across southeast and south-central Colorado, it just made sense to bring our expertise in outpatient and residential behavioral health. The 111 years of combined health care experience of our organizations creates a very powerful combination for our patients, but it is our end goal to provide a ‘no wrong door experience’ moving forward.”

Similarly, Arnoldi looks forward to the services Valley-Wide will provide, as well as the leadership and expertise needed for whole-person healthcare.

“The missions and visions of the two companies, as well as our leadership styles complement each other very well. During our discussions about the merger, it was

important to keep our patients and the community at the center of our decision. Bringing our two organizations together, will truly build an integrated system that helps to ensure our patients get the services they need when they need it. This decision supports the vision of Valley-Wide to be the innovative community leader in advancing the highest level of whole-person health for all. Rural Colorado deserves a more integrated, coordinated, and comprehensive model of healthcare services. The model makes sense, I've seen it work, and I am excited to get started," Arnoldi said.

As the merger progresses, clients will receive letters via the US Mail in late February or early March with the exciting changes they can expect to see. Our partners in health care and referral agencies can expect additional information soon as well.

Both entity's websites and social media platforms will be regularly updated as changes occur. Signage, sponsorships, and marketing efforts can be expected to change to reflect the single Valley-Wide entity over the next six months.

Public Q&A sessions will be scheduled in the near future. Questions about the merger can be directed to either Krista Martinez, Director of Executive Support at Valley-Wide, MartinezK@valley-widehealth.org, 719-587-1010 or Jennifer Pollmiller, Communications Director at SHG, JPollmiller@shgco.org, 719-363-1595.

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About Valley-Wide Health Systems: Valley-Wide Health Systems (Valley-Wide) is committed to providing, high-quality, safe, effective and integrated health care services in a respectful and inclusive manner for all with special consideration for medically underserved populations. Valley-Wide, a Community Health Center (CHC), is a private non-profit 501 (c)(3) corporation governed by a volunteer community board. Established in 1976, Valley-Wide has sixteen primary health care delivery sites strategically located throughout multiple rural counties in Southern Colorado. These full-service clinics are complemented by ten dental clinics, four physical therapy clinics, an outpatient behavioral health clinic, and numerous ancillary health services to address routine and/or complex needs of the patient populations and communities served.

Along with multiple outreach programs, Valley-Wide also oversees an Agricultural Worker Health Service Program that provides vouchers to patients in areas of the state that do not house CHCs.

Valley-Wide serves all ages through a family practice focus approach. Emphasis is placed on assisting the patient, reducing barriers such as cost, culture, language, literacy, and transportation that may hinder use of appropriate health care services.