

NEWS RELEASE:

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Grant Funding Will Increase Access to Health Care in Hyde County

(Ocracoke, N.C.) The Ocracoke Health Center, Inc. (OHC) has been awarded \$812,500 in grant funding made available by the Affordable Care Act to increase access to affordable, comprehensive health services for the citizens of Hyde County and the surrounding communities. The OHC is one of three in the state to receive funding to become a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) new access point during this past application process.

The designation as a FQHC is given to community-based organizations to provide comprehensive primary and preventative care, including oral health, mental health or substance abuse services to patients regardless of their ability to pay or health insurance status.

The OHC Board of Directors has joined with Engelhard Medical Center (EMC) Board of Directors to form a collaborative working group to provide primary care services to their communities.

OHC is a non-profit rural health center that has been providing high quality and affordable medical service since 1981 in Ocracoke. EMC is a non-profit community health center located in Engelhard that expanded into a new location on Highway 264 in 2009. The new health center funding will allow for new and expanded services including dental, pharmacy, migrant health outreach, and an expansion of behavioral health services. Both centers continue to accept most insurance plans, including Medicaid and Medicare. However, the Center's mission will continue to be improving access for low-income individuals and will accept patients without insurance on a sliding scale that is based on family size and household income.

"We have been working on this project since 2009 starting with a federally funded planning grant," said Cheryl Ballance, administrative director of the OHC. "The North Carolina Office of Rural Health and Community Care (NCORHCC) and the North Carolina Community Health Center Association were strategic in guiding us in developing our collaborations, especially with the Engelhard Medical Center, who we are partnering with in this grant. We were able to successfully prepare and submit this grant application with grant funds from the NCORHCC and Prevent Child Abuse NC, along with the assistance of many community and state partners. We are very excited to be able to bring services to communities that have been underserved, especially in the areas of dental care and behavioral health care."

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