

## Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc. Social Drivers of Health Efforts

### ABOUT US

Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc. (Valley-Wide) a Community/Migrant Health Center (C/MHC), is a private non-profit 501 (c)(3) corporation governed by a volunteer community board. Established in 1976, Valley-Wide is located throughout multiple rural counties in Southern Colorado (Figure 1). Valley-Wide operates distinct but

integrated service lines including primary medical, dental, behavioral health, physical therapy, and numerous ancillary services through 15 primary health care delivery sites, eight dental clinics, and four physical therapy clinics. After merging with Southeast Health Group (March 2023), Valley-Wide includes 10 additional service sites and expanded behavioral health services including individual therapy, group therapy, individual skills training,

group skills training, and Psychiatric Medication. The merger also brings an established peer support services program, which Valley-Wide seeks to replicate in the San Luis Valley (SLV). In addition to the array of outpatient services, Valley-Wide now offers Youth Respite, an Acute Treatment Unit, a Withdrawal Management Unit, Transitional Residential Treatment, and a sober living unit operated by Oxford House. Valley-Wide offers a robust transportation program to ensure access to each of these services.

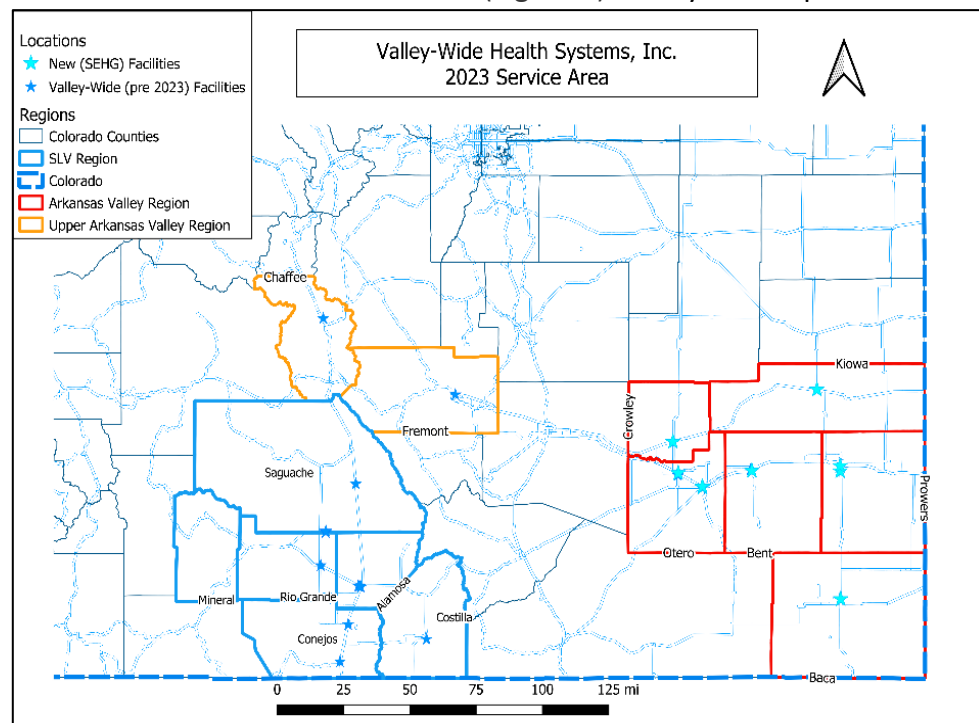


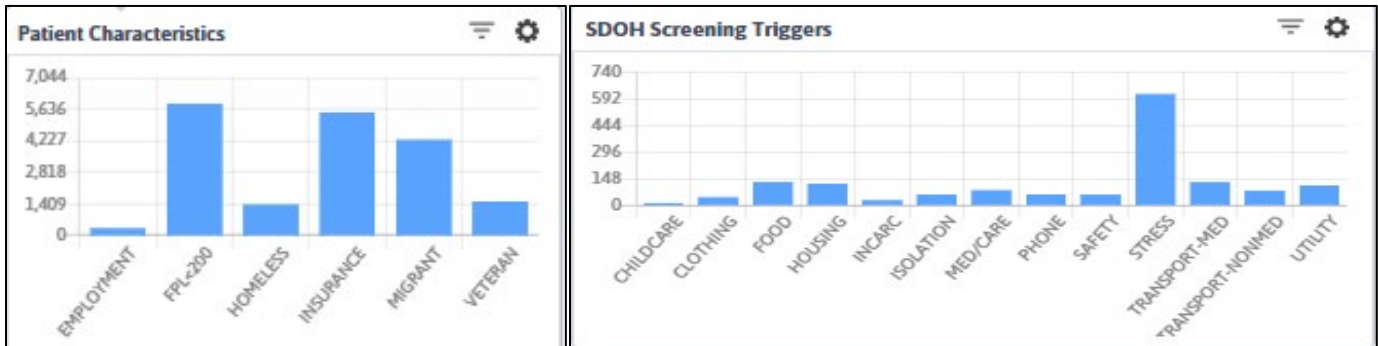
Figure 1. Valley-Wide Health Systems Service Area

### SCREENING FOR SOCIAL NEEDS & UNDERSTANDING OUR PATIENTS' SOCIAL NEEDS

At Valley-Wide, we understand the impact social needs have on our patients' lives and health outcomes. We seek to understand the myriad factors that create the healthcare landscape we share, both now and in the future. Valley-Wide uses social needs data to understand community needs and advocate for improvements at the policy, payment, and systems levels to achieve better health for all our communities. Valley-Wide uses PRAPARE®, a national screening tool and approach to collect standardized social needs data to better understand the patients' social needs and transform their care. PRAPARE consists of a set of national core

measures as well as a set of optional measures for community priorities. The tool was informed by research, the experience of existing social risk assessments, and stakeholder engagement. For more information about PRAPARE, visit [www.prapare.org](http://www.prapare.org). Using the PRAPARE® tool, Valley wide was able to identify patients' characteristics and screening triggers as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Social Drivers of Health (2022 Count of Screening Flags)



## HEALTH CENTER RESPONSE TO PATIENTS' SOCIAL NEEDS

Direct patient surveys are another method Valley-Wide has used to understand needs and develop solutions. In 2018, Valley-Wide asked patients at each of its clinics about their transportation needs using simple paper surveys. From the responses received (N=1,220), an analysis indicated that 17% of patients had missed an appointment due to lack of transportation, and 32% did not have reliable access to a vehicle. Over the next year, Valley-Wide developed a business plan to create its own transportation program, which now provides free transportation to the community for SDOH-related trips.



As illustrated in Figure 3, Valley-Wide Ride averaged 415 rides per month over the first 20 months after launch but has increased to an average of 607 rides per month since April of 2022. In total, the program has provided 16,215 rides since its launch in 2020.

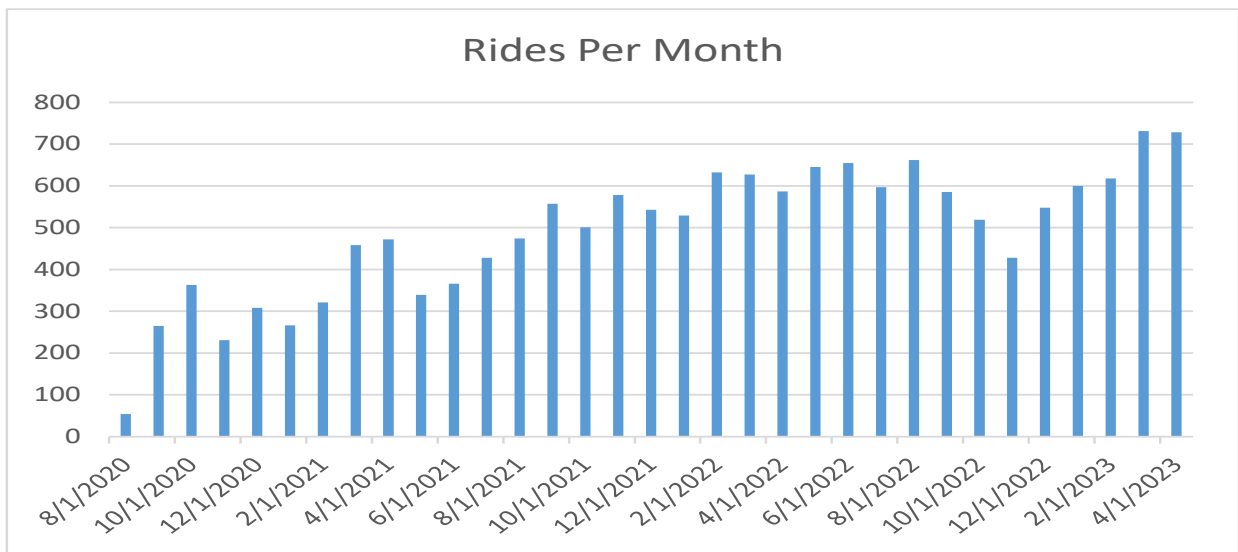


Figure 3. Rides per month

John-Paul Garcia, Transportation Coordinator, noted that they have been able to witness first-hand the impact that this has on the communities they serve. Valley-Wide is breaking ground with the free Valley-Wide Ride service. People are constantly shocked to hear that there is no charge for the rides. People can get to their medical appointments and social trips (i.e., groceries, laundry, human services, court appointments) that otherwise would have to depend on a family member, friend, or expensive taxi services. If patients can't find a way to appointments, they would miss such important appointments all together. These services allow people to maintain some level of independence – getting the basic needs taken care of. Garcia also noted that he hears how people express their gratitude for such services that are provided. Most of the transportation providers in the Valley-Wide area only collaborate with Medicaid to provide rides and such rides cannot be social trips, they are only for medical appointment purposes. The services at Valley-Wide Ride are unique because they can reach the people who may not have Medicaid and services are extended to individuals beyond the purpose of just medical appointments. Garcia believes that by removing the transportation barrier, it's easier for people to take care of their physical health needs and in return they've seen it help with mental health as well because "it brings people a way to move towards thriving instead of just surviving."

## CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

Valley-Wide launched its transportation service, Valley-Wide Ride, right before the beginning of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. This presented a significant challenge to the new transportation department, as rules and policies had to be developed to keep both drivers and passengers safe. By implementing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements and ensuring that both drivers and passengers wore PPE, Valley-Wide continued to operate and expand the transportation program throughout the pandemic.