

June 15, 2021

DOH-PINELLAS RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD FOR COVID-19 EFFORTS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



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The COVID-19 pandemic was difficult for every segment of society and those experiencing homelessness in our community were no exception. In Pinellas County, public health and its partners collaborated on strategies to reduce the spread of the virus among those individuals through innovative strategies that were recognized nationwide.

DOH-Pinellas was one of only eight large health departments to earn a **2021 Gold Innovative Practice** Award from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO). These awards celebrate local health departments for developing innovative programs to meet the needs of their community during the COVID-19 pandemic. The designation as a Gold Innovative Practice demonstrates the highest level of program innovation and reflects the collaboration, adaptability and program resilience.

The award's narrative is posted online on NACCHO's database here <https://nacchoapplication.secure-platform.com/a/gallery/rounds/2/details/161>.

The Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County (DOH-Pinellas) worked with partners that included the Homeless Leadership Alliance, Pinellas County Human Services and Directions for Living to tackle the issue.

The partners provided non-congregate sheltering to safely isolate and quarantine homeless individuals so that hospitals and other shelters were not burdened. A shelter liaison position was created to coordinate with providers to reduce the spread of COVID-19 transmission in shelters and other congregate living facilities. Through the strategies in the initiative, Pinellas avoided major COVID-19 outbreaks among residents in these facilities.



In all, the initiative assisted 188 individuals, with 58 of those being not previously connected to health care enrolled in Pinellas County's Health Care for the Homeless Program. Another 52 individuals were street homeless and were discharged to housing or a shelter.

The county's health program serves this population at the Bayside Health Clinic and via the Mobile Medical Unit (photo at left) that travels to locations serving clients experiencing homelessness. For

information about the Health Care for the Homeless program, go to <http://www.pinellascounty.org/humanServices/hch.htm>.

“I am very proud of the work our staff and partners did to address this public health issue during the pandemic,” said DOH-Pinellas Director Dr. Ulyee Choe. “COVID-19 showed us that partnerships and collaborative work are strong in Pinellas when it comes to serving our community. This NACCHO recognition is really a win for everyone in that partnership.”

NACCHO’s Innovative Practices are strategies to local public health issues that were developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and were creatively adapted to meet the circumstances of the pandemic.

For information about DOH-Pinellas, go to www.PinellasHealth.com or follow us on Twitter @HealthyPinellas. We are also on Facebook and Nextdoor to provide public health information to the community.

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