



Reproductive Health Changes Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why was the decision made to adjust services at Marion County's Public Health Clinic?

In 2017, Marion County engaged a consultant to complete an organizational/management review of the Health Department. The county regularly evaluates county departments to ensure we are meeting the needs of our community in an efficient and effective manner. Included in the review was an evaluation of the changing landscape of public health in Oregon as part of House Bill 3100 (2015) known as Public Health Modernization. This bill set the framework for transitioning Oregon public health services from providing clinical services to focusing more on community and population health issues.

The completed organizational/management review included multiple recommendations, including to transition reproductive health to community providers. The report stated:

“Reproductive health may be better suited for absorption into community practice, however important considerations remain regarding the transfer to clinical services and the role of MCHD to ensure service provision is adequate for vulnerable populations in the county.”

As a follow-up to this recommendation, the county engaged the Rede Group in August 2019 to evaluate clinical services, including reproductive health, in relation to the needs of our community.

The assessment found that the number of individuals seeking services from Marion County's Reproductive Health Program had declined in recent years and that adequate alternatives exist to support the needs of the community were the program to close. In recent years, a shift in funding models for these services has led to an increase in access to and availability of primary care providers.

We know that reproductive care and family planning are best provided by a primary care provider and look forward to connecting more men and women with primary care providers to address their overall health needs. We will continue to offer testing for HIV, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, and immunizations.

2. Is there opportunity for public comment?

We are happy to hear and address community concerns at any time. Please email HHSCommunications@co.marion.or.us. We will also be checking in with those who were patients in our program to ensure they have received fair and equitable care.

3. The assessment states that there would be an eight month “transitional period” to prepare the community for the change. What happened to that?

COVID-19 forced us to redeploy 85-90% of our public health team to functions within our

Incident Management Team. It also prompted the temporary closure of our Public Health Clinic in March. As we look toward slowly reopening while continuing our COVID-19 response, it became clear that this was the best time to move forward with the change.

Individuals who had used our reproductive health services within the last several years were notified in March of the clinic's temporary closure, and staff began assisting in them in finding care at that time.

4. How will people with no insurance receive reproductive health care?

Oregon's Reproductive Health Equity Act expands availability of reproductive health (i.e., family planning) services to individuals who previously did not qualify or who faced barriers to access. We will be working with providers to help them enroll in the Oregon Reproductive Health Program, which will greatly increase access to care in our community. The change will enable more individuals to establish relationships with a primary care provider, which has tremendous benefits for the long-term health of individuals and the community.

We are also available to help individuals sign up for the Oregon Health Plan and/or Medicaid. Our Public Health Clinic can assist and can be reached at 503-588-5342.

5. How will individuals seeking reproductive healthcare find providers if they don't have insurance?

Our Public Health Clinic will continue to provide referrals to all community members. We have also made a list of providers available [online](#). We will periodically reach out to individuals who had been enrolled in the program to ensure they were able to connect with a provider and have been satisfied with the care they have received.

6. What systems level work will be done and how will it help our community?

As the local public health authority, our role in health care is transitioning from direct service to improving health outcomes for populations by promoting healthy lifestyles, researching disease and injury prevention, and detecting, preventing, and responding to infectious diseases. As needs are identified, we will be able to form coalitions to address the need at the community level. We will collect data from providers and individuals receiving reproductive health care to ensure the needs of the community are being met.

We will also offer technical assistance grants to help providers with administrative costs associated with enrolling in Oregon Reproductive Health Program so they can be reimbursed through the program. The shift will connect more individuals with primary care providers, a move which will have lasting positive impacts on the health of our community.

We will continue to offer testing for HIV and STDs in our Salem Public Health Clinic, as well as immunizations.