

# 48TH AVENUE HEALTH CENTER: MEETING CLIENTS WHERE THEY ARE



For 40 years, the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless has responded to the specialized health needs of adults and children experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. We offer medical and behavioral health care, substance use treatment, dental, vision, and pharmacy services to reduce as many barriers as possible for our patients. In 2023, over 17,000 individuals received healthcare through the Coalition. The 48th Avenue Health Center is a key location for equitable access to care.

The 48th Avenue Health Center, located inside the Denver Rescue Mission and near the Samaritan House and the Crossing, serves as a satellite location of the Stout Street Health Center, a Federally Qualified Health Center specially designated to serve those experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

This location is designed specifically to serve clients living in the shelter environment as well as those in the surrounding neighborhood. As with the other CCH Health Centers, the primary conditions clients receive services for include hypertension, diabetes, mental health disorders, and substance use disorders. The majority of patients served are male (over 75%) and the majority of patients served are between the ages of 50 and 64.



**1097** CLIENTS RECEIVED  
CARE IN 2023

**60** CLIENTS ARE ASSISTED DAILY THROUGH  
CONSULTATIONS, SCHEDULING, AND  
PRESCRIPTION PICK-UPS

## AN INTEGRATED MODEL

The location of the health center onsite at Denver Rescue Mission eliminates transportation barriers to the downtown CCH campus, destigmatizes seeking care by facilitating easy access, and promotes deep relationships between staff and patients.

This model of embedded, regularly available healthcare was first implemented in Denver at scale during the height of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. At that time, the Denver Rescue Mission, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, and the City of Denver Department of Housing Stability (HOST) partnered to provide onsite care at the National Western Complex and the Coliseum. Soon after, the organizations came together to conceptualize a more permanent healthcare solution for those in the shelter environment.



The partnership has only grown stronger since the Health Center's opening in February of 2022. Denver Rescue Mission staff report that because clients have been able to access healthcare more easily, including receiving prescription deliveries onsite, they have been more efficacious in submitting and processing applications for housing, as clients are in more regular contact with service providers. In addition, Health Center staff find being onsite allows them to improve communications with clients while still being HIPAA compliant.

For example, labs were completed for one onsite client, pseudonym Jeremy, who was not able to be reached via phone. The clinical staff then was able to send an encrypted email to the onsite Denver Rescue Mission staff who were able to get into contact with Jeremy. As a result, he was seen within one day and his condition had deteriorated considerably since his last visit. The clinical staff was able to quickly assess him, and he was sent to the hospital via 911. With the complex issues faced by clients, these quick interventions due to onsite integrations can be lifesaving.

## WHAT'S NEW?

The 48th Avenue Health Center opened in 2022 with a welcoming lobby and three exam rooms, accessible through the Denver Rescue Mission main entrance. Following renovations, the facility now features five exam rooms, a dedicated dental room, an access desk to facilitate the intake of new patients, and a new restroom.



## FUNDING

Funding for the 48th Avenue Health Center was provided by Emergency Solutions Grant (COVID) funds, also known as ESG-CV, part of the Federal CARES Act. This ESG-CV funding was granted to the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless by Denver's Department of Housing Stability (HOST) to address homelessness and housing.

The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless maintains all operating costs, but pays zero rent or utilities for the facility. The City of Denver paid for all recent upgrades to the property.

“Whenever I'm feeling overwhelmed, I stand in the middle of the clinic, close my eyes and imagine what it looked like when we walked into the empty space for the first time, then open my eyes and see what we have been able to accomplish, a fully functional clinic!”

— Michael Masse, Supervisor,  
48th Avenue Health Center

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