



WHITMAN-WALKER CLINIC

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WHITMAN-WALKER CLINIC ANNOUNCES 2009 CHANGES TO RESPOND TO HISTORIC ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

Clinic Will Close or Outsource Some Programs, Lay Off Employees

WASHINGTON – Whitman-Walker Clinic announced today that the deteriorating state of the economy will force it to close or outsource some programs and lay off up to 45 employees by the end of the first quarter of 2009. A combination of declining revenues and an increase in new patients coming to the Clinic for uncompensated health care has led Whitman-Walker to take painful but necessary action.

“Clearly, this is a difficult situation for us,” said Whitman-Walker Chief Executive Officer Donald Blanchon. “The current state of the economy has forced us to make tough decisions to position the Clinic to care for the community in 2009.

“As the economy worsens, we are caring for more new patients and providing more uncompensated care,” said Blanchon. “Many of these new patients have lost their jobs and no longer have either the income or the health coverage to pay for the care they need. Our commitment to caring for anyone who comes to us is unwavering, but it is forcing us to take some painful actions to continue to provide critical health care services.”

Although the Clinic started 2008 with a number of program changes and sold its 1407 S Street property over the summer, the general state of the economy has taken its toll.

“None of those changes, including the sale of the 1407 S Street property, was designed to cope with the kind of economic downturn the country has seen the last few months,” said Blanchon. “The building sale helped us deal with past financial problems and provide funds for badly needed infrastructure improvements. However, decreasing revenue and an increase in our patient base, both driven by the poor economy, have left us in a position where we simply must act now.

“We have already implemented several revenue generating and cost efficiency measures to address these

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financial challenges,” said Blanchon. “We expanded our grant requests to include more health care areas such as primary care and chronic disease management. We are outsourcing our pharmacy services to improve patient satisfaction and clinical outcomes while providing a steady stream of funding.”

Whitman-Walker Clinic pharmacy operations will be assumed in March 2009 by Maxor, a company that specializes in operating health center pharmacies. Maxor will provide medication consultations, extended hours of operation, and prescription refills online and over the phone.

The major changes are:

- Whitman-Walker Clinic of Northern Virginia will close by the end of the first quarter of 2009. All patients who receive care there will be given the option to transition to one of our DC health centers, either the Elizabeth Taylor Medical Center in northwest DC or Max Robinson Center in Anacostia. Clinic employees will work with these patients to ensure that they see no disruption in care.
- The Bridge Back program, a residential addictions treatment program, will also close by the end of the first quarter of 2009. Current patients whose course of treatment will end on or before Feb. 28 will be allowed to complete the program before it is closed. Other patients will be transitioned to other treatment programs in the community.
- While up to 20 administrative positions will be eliminated, some additional positions to generate revenue or to improve efficiency of operations will be created.

“The loss of Northern Virginia, Bridge Back and so many of our colleagues is very hard for us,” said Blanchon. “Northern Virginia was our first satellite center and has served residents of Northern Virginia for 20 years. However, we have to deal with current economic realities. We have experienced an erosion of government funding for HIV care in Virginia and see few long-term solutions to provide uncompensated care in Northern Virginia. We believe that we can provide more options for care to Northern Virginia residents at our DC facilities.”

“Bridge Back, although a small program, is one in which we have taken great pride,” said Blanchon. “But, again, economic realities are forcing us to make changes that are painful.”

“I am very proud of the tremendous work that has been done by Whitman-Walker of Northern Virginia and the Bridge Back program,” said Blanchon. “Our employees who have worked at those sites over the years have given their all to their patients and I want to acknowledge them and thank them, along with other staff who will be leaving, for their commitment and dedication to Whitman-Walker Clinic.”

Established in 1973, Whitman-Walker Clinic is a non-profit, community-based provider of health care and social services in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. Through three sites, in the District of Columbia and Northern Virginia, the Clinic offers primary medical and dental care; mental health and addictions counseling and treatment; HIV education, prevention, and testing; legal services; medical adherence case management; and a food bank. Whitman-Walker Clinic is committed to meeting the health needs of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community and people living with HIV/AIDS.

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