



**Care Harbor Focused Care Program  
Healthcare for Veterans**

Los Angeles Trade Technical College  
November 4-5, 2023

**RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

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## PROGRAM SUMMARY

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Healthcare for Veterans was the second free clinic in Care Harbor's Focused Care Program. These clinics are expanding the reach of our mega-clinic program with services and resources tailored to the needs of underserved populations who face special healthcare challenges. Smaller in scale, the clinics allow more venue options, cost less to produce and can be scheduled with greater frequency than the mega-clinics.



Healthcare for Veterans was held November 4th and 5th in exhibit space on the campus of Los Angeles Trade Technical College, the site of the previous Focused Care clinic. Setup was completed on November 2nd and 3rd, and the clinic was loaded out on November 6th.

Veterans health is a significant need. According to the Census Bureau, California has the largest veteran population of any state, with 244,000 living in Los Angeles County. More than 50% of current veterans do not receive benefits from the VA and an even smaller percentage receive dental or vision benefits. (To qualify for dental care, veterans must show that their dental problems are service-related – an estimated 90% don't qualify.) It is an aging population with about half over 65. Veterans face a range of medical issues, including service-related injuries and illnesses, and mental health challenges including post-traumatic stress disorder and depression.

Care Harbor worked with veterans organizations to plan clinic services. In addition to dental, vision and medical care, the clinic offered mental health counseling and referrals, HIV/STD screenings, substance abuse counseling and referrals, and assistance in applying for Veterans Benefits Administration (VA) programs, a complicated process that sometimes discourages submission. On site navigators also provided information and enrollment in other no cost and low cost coverage programs.

## VETERANS OUTREACH

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Care Harbor worked with multiple agencies to provide information and distribute flyers about the upcoming clinic to local veterans.

### **U.S. Vets - Inglewood**

This facility houses 400 resident veterans and another 200 in transient accommodations. Care Harbor worked with the administration to conduct a survey of the veterans housed there to determine the felt need for a free clinic, the services most in demand, and to develop a projection of how many veterans wanted to attend.

### **U.S. Vets - Bob Hope Patriotic Hall**

We consulted with leadership at the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to identify other veteran groups and provide them with clinic information.

### **Veterans Peer Access Network**

This L.A. County agency provided planning guidance and was present at the clinic to inform veterans about assistance programs available to them.

### **Los Angeles Trade Technical College**

A number of veterans are enrolled at LATTC. The veterans office at the college distributed flyers on campus, and also sent the surveys and flyers to veteran offices at 9 other colleges and universities with veterans enrolled. 8 responded with interested veterans.

### **Los Angeles Medical Recruiting Company**

This Army unit is responsible for medical and dental personnel. We worked with the company commander to recruit service professionals to volunteer for the veterans clinic. (Volunteers can receive service ribbons and commendations for participating.)

### **Local Media**

A press release and media alerts were distributed to print and broadcast outlets.

## CLINIC PROFILE

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At the Healthcare for Veterans free clinic, hundreds of volunteer healthcare professionals and lay people joined with provider organizations and agencies to deliver integrative, client-centered care to veterans in need.

Focused Care clinics are planned for fewer attendees with more services provided to each client, with resources tailored to client needs. Medical services included intake triage, primary care exams and screenings including A1C, cholesterol, and HIV/Aids. Dental care was provided with 12 chairs and operatories, 2 X-ray rooms, dental triage exams and sterilization areas.

Services included cleanings, fillings and extractions. Several root canals were also provided. Vision care included 8 vision lanes with phoropters, 4 slit lamps, 4 auto refractors, tonometers, lensometers and other equipment. Prescription eyeglasses were made and fitted on site. Mental health consultations and referrals were provided with private rooms available for clients. After their clinician visits, medical, dental and vision clients received one-on-one health education and self-care instructions from a team of registered nurses and final year nursing students, helping to promote compliance and favorable outcomes following the clinic.



Most veterans received multiple clinic services.

Lunch was provided for all clients who were at the clinic through midday. Services included:

**Medical** - 106 clients received exams and screenings

**Dental** - 143 clients received cleanings, fillings, extractions and other procedures

**Vision** - 146 clients received exams and eyeglasses made on site.

Vital signs, medical and social histories were taken for each client at intake triage. Substance abuse counseling and referrals were provided on site, along with relevant social services. Insurance navigators informed and enrolled clients into no cost or low cost coverage programs available to them. Individual client services, demographics, test results and other data were recorded in Care Harbor's electronic health record system. Stripped of HIPAA sensitive client identifiers, these data provide the information for this report.

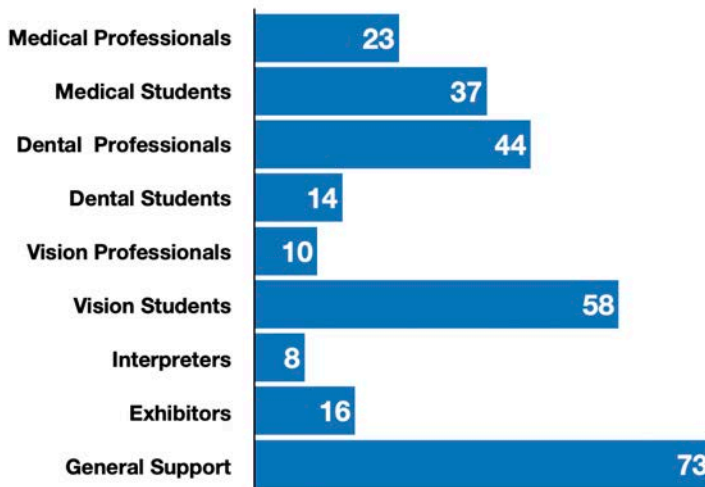
Overall client volume was lower than projected,. Most veteran agencies did not meet their estimated totals, and their facility staff shortages also limited participation. However, the total number of services provided at the clinic was near capacity.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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As with all Care Harbor events, the veterans clinic was the community coming together to help its own. Care Harbor provided the setting, systems, resources and organization to make it possible. Professional and lay volunteers registered on Care Harbor’s online system. Professional licenses were vetted and liability coverage provided for clinicians whose own coverage did not extend to the event. Volunteers received orientation emails, clinic protocols and a scannable QR code to speed sign in for i.d. badges at the event. A compulsory three hour training webinar was conducted for nursing students prior to the clinic, and department leads conducted onsite orientations for professional volunteers and students in their respective sections prior to each day’s operating hours.

### 282 professionals and lay persons volunteered for the clinic

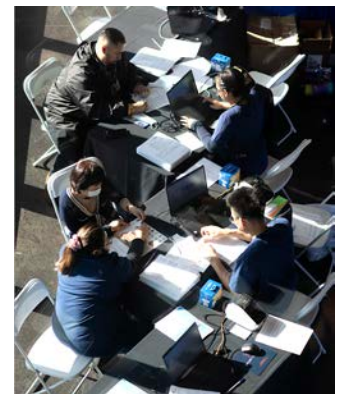


Medical professionals included physicians, nurses and pharmacists. Dental professionals included general dentists, oral surgeons, hygienists and registered dental assistants. Vision professionals included optometrists and opticians. All students were under the direction of their school supervisors and Care Harbor department leads. Professionals served full or half day shifts. Some volunteered for multiple days.

Care Harbor events provide students with clinical experience valuable to their education. Their exposure to vulnerable populations may also lead to a lifelong commitment to help meet future healthcare needs of the underserved.

Local hospitals, healthcare organizations, and County agencies volunteered their services, resources and personnel. The Focused Care clinics, produced with greater frequency than the mega-clinic events, will offer more opportunities for schools to participate.

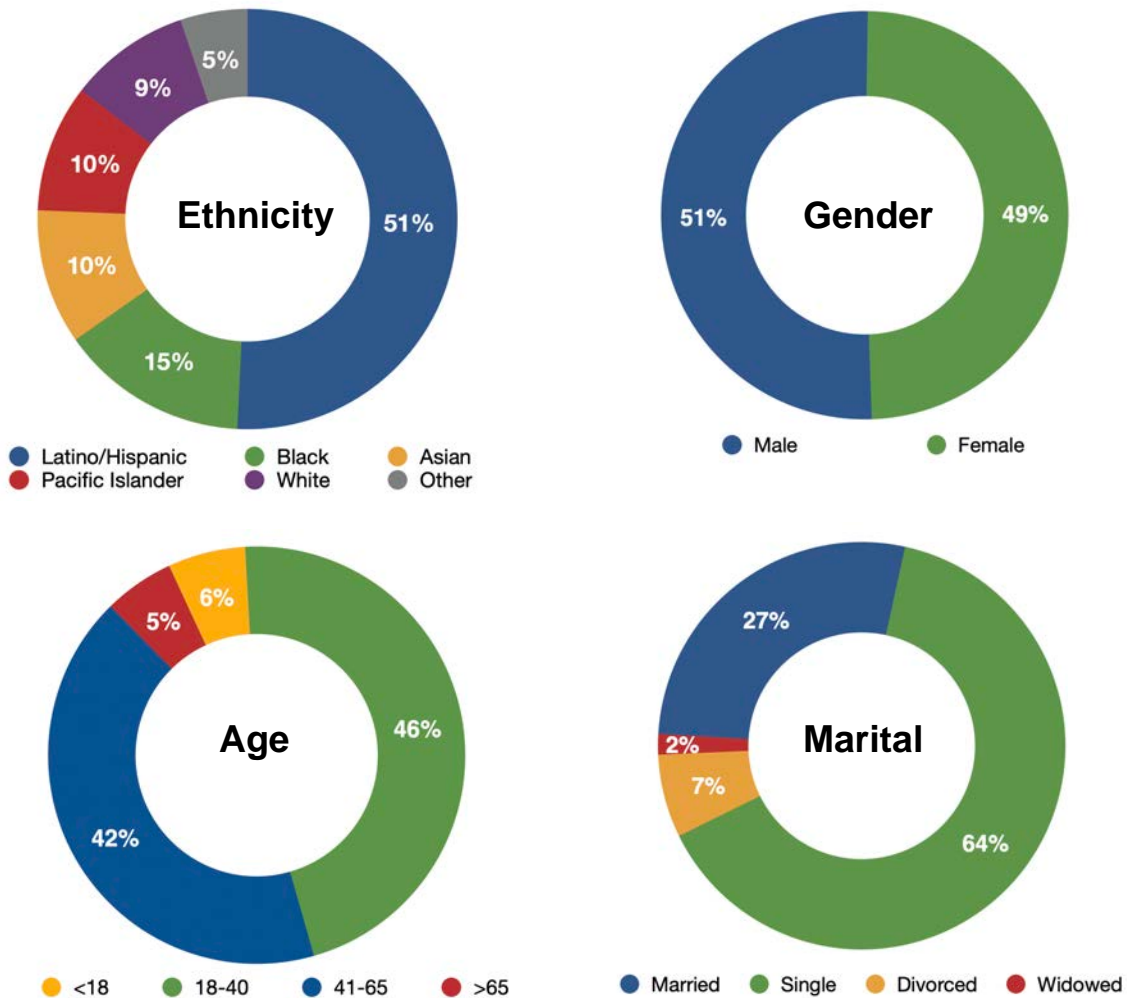
Community partners provided funding and services, including Good Hope Medical Foundation, Western University of Health Sciences, QueensCare, Kaiser-Permanente, L.A. Care and others. A full list is on page 15 of this report.



## CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

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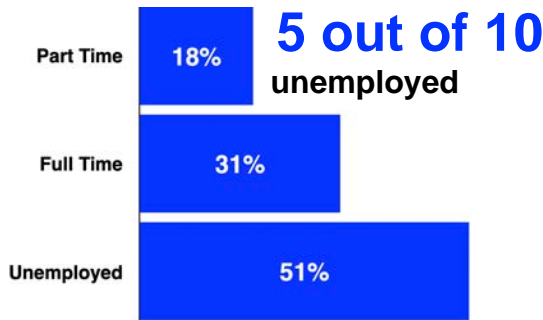
Care Harbor’s EHR system provides detailed client demographic data. This information informs future planning, and helps illuminate areas of need and health equity challenges among Los Angeles County’s underserved communities.



The demographic breakdown of clients at the clinic was not representative of the national average for veterans. In 2022, 74.2% of living veterans identified as white, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Black Americans were the second largest group, at 12.4%. In 2022, almost half of U.S. veterans were 65 or older (49.3%). Nationally, 89.7% of veterans are male. These clinic differences may be attributable to geographic variances, recruiting outreach of the agencies, and the smaller sample size.

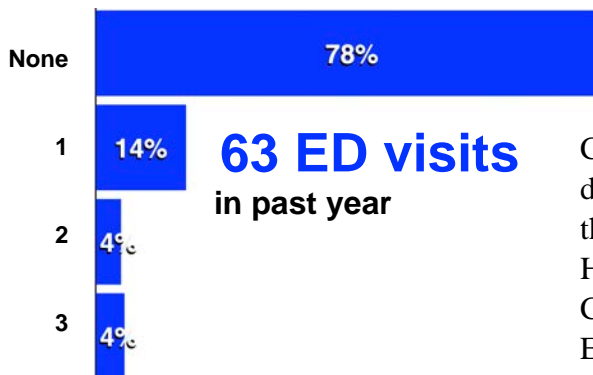
During their registration interviews, clients were asked about their life situations and access to healthcare. Responses were optional but most participated.

### Employment?



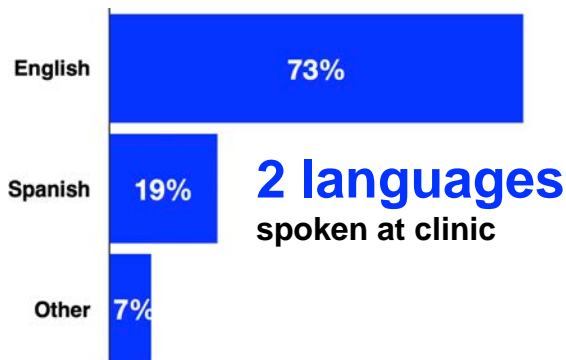
Based on a 93% sample. Clients who chose not to answer or are under 18 are excluded. Employment does not guarantee employer insurance so the uninsured may be higher than the percentage of unemployed. Eligibility for VA benefits depends on the level of disability claimed (there are 6 levels), discharge status and other factors. Determining coverage may be a complex process.

### Emergency Department visits?



Clients made 63 visits to an emergency department in the past year, a much lower ratio than other Care Harbor clinics. A United Healthcare study puts the average cost of a 2022 California ED visit at \$2,960, placing the cost of ED visits by the Care Harbor clients at \$186,400. If visits were for routine or preventable problems, potential savings are significant.

### Preferred language?



English was the predominant language. While Interpreters were present, the need was much less than in Care Harbor clinics for the general population. However, major signage, informed consent forms, waivers and educational materials were provided in both English and Spanish to assure clarity in critical communications.



## Geographic Distribution (zip codes)

74% sample. Records without a client response or with missing integers are excluded. There is a broader distribution of zip codes than anticipated. Several veteran residential facilities did not provide transportation which would have concentrated client attendance from their areas. 83 zip codes were represented at the clinic.

90001	4	90033	2	90802	1	91741	1
90004	2	90034	1	90805	4	91744	1
90006	2	90037	2	91007	1	91752	1
90007	5	90041	2	91016	2	91761	1
90008	1	90044	2	91030	1	91776	4
90011	7	90047	2	91201	1	91786	1
90012	2	90057	1	91205	3	91801	1
90013	1	90061	1	91206	2	91803	2
90015	3	90065	1	91207	2	92337	2
90016	5	90201	1	91320	1	92507	1
90017	6	90221	1	91325	1	92553	1
90018	3	90242	2	91331	2	92570	1
90020	1	90255	1	91340	1	92840	1
90021	1	90275	2	91354	1	93065	1
90022	1	90280	5	91401	1	93117	1
90023	4	90301	1	91405	1	93535	1
90024	1	90305	1	91605	1	93551	1
90026	2	90405	1	91706	3	93552	3
90028	1	90660	1	91710	1	95823	1
90029	1	90744	1	91723	1		
90031	2	90777	1	91733	2		

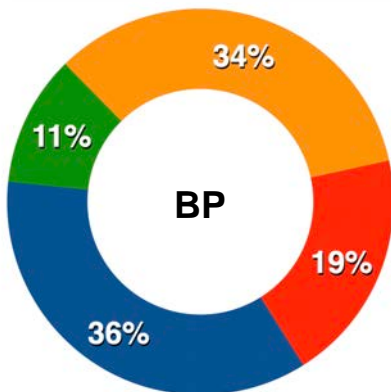
## TRIAGE FINDINGS

During intake triage, detailed medical and social histories were taken at 12 nursing stations. Screening questions helped to identify mental health issues and clients were advised that counselors were available on site. If clients presented urgent medical symptoms they were escorted to the medical section before receiving additional clinic services. An EMT crew was on site for all clinic hours. Results of intake exams and interviews were recorded in the client EHRs, and available to other clinicians. Most clients received multiple services following triage: medical, dental, vision, mental health and preventive care. Health literacy education, social services and coverage consultations were available to all clients.

### Hypertension

Normal	Elevated	Stage 1	Stage 2
<120 AND <80	120-129 AND <80	130-139 OR 80-89	>140 OR >90

Source: Mayo Clinic

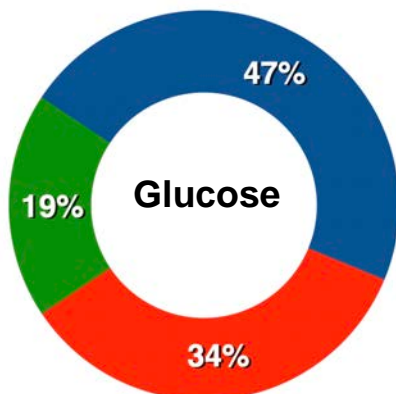


89% of clients had elevated blood pressure or stage 1 or stage 2 hypertension. Clients with severe hypertension were evaluated by a medical professional before receiving dental or other services.

### Blood Glucose

Normal	Prediabetes	Diabetes
< 100	100-125	>125

Source: American Diabetes Association

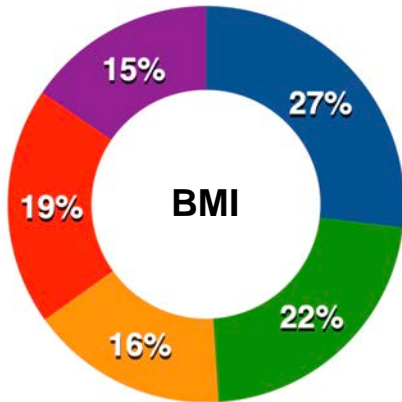


Glucose levels are for general reference and not diagnostic. Clinicians interpreted factors such as fasting or postprandial status, age and others to identify pre-diabetic and diabetic clients. Percentages are based on a 64% sample. Clients declining the glucose test are not included. A1C testing was available to confirm diagnoses.

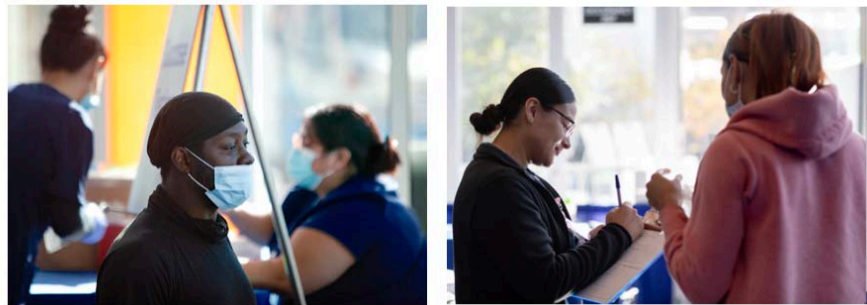
## Body Mass Index

Underweight	Normal	Overweight	Obese	Severely Obese
< 18.5	18,5 - 24.9	25 - 29.9	30 -34.9	35+

Source: CDC



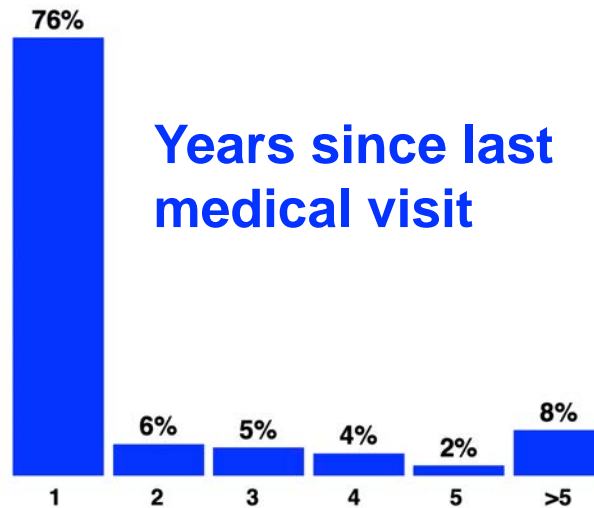
65% of clients were overweight, obese or clinically obese — a finding that is consistent with past Care Harbor clinics. Health literacy education included diet and nutrition counseling. Obesity can vary significantly with ethnicity. Ethnic breakdowns of BMI are available in Care Harbor’s database.



## MEDICAL SERVICES

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Clients received exams from primary care and internal medicine physicians along with screenings for A1C, cholesterol, HIV/AIDS, and STDs. Pharmacists and an on site dispensary filled prescriptions written by medical and dental clinicians.

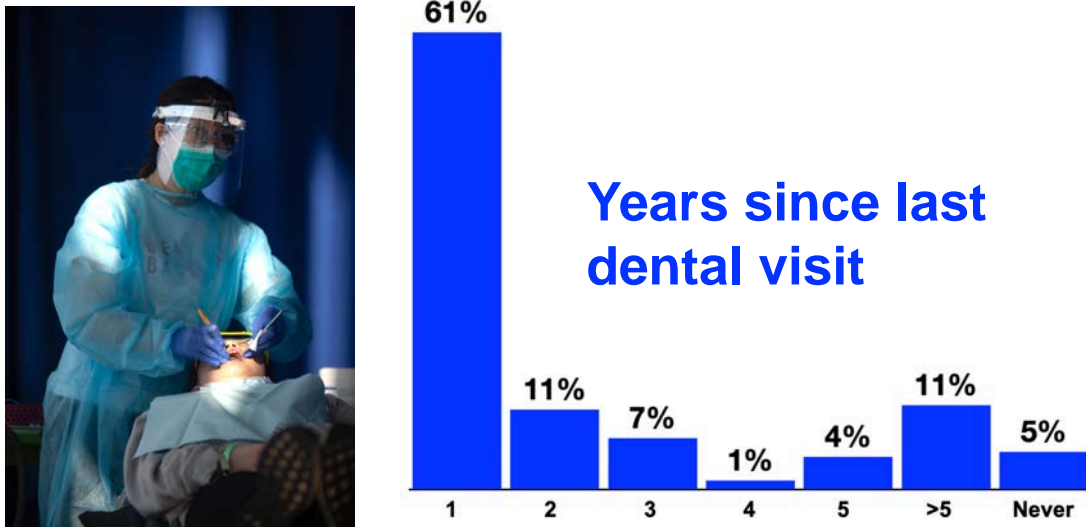


Percentages are based on an 86% sample (those who did not respond are excluded). Medical care is more accessible to veterans through VA and other services than dental or vision care and most clients had seen a physician within the past year. However, 10% had not had a doctor's visit for five years or more.

Medical care was available to all clients at the clinic but demand was not as great as the other services. In some cases, medical evaluation was compulsory, for example if blood pressure exceeded clinic guidelines for dental procedures.

## DENTAL SERVICES

Dentists, hygienists, dental assistants and technicians provided oral health with 12 dental chairs and operatories, 2 x-ray rooms, sterilization section and other resources. Oral health is a vital component of overall well-being and the Focused Care clinic model allows clients to choose dental care in addition to other services in an integrative approach to care delivery.



(Percentages based on 88% who responded.) 20% of clients said they had not received dental care for 5 years or more. The majority of dental problems are preventable and a health literacy team was on site at the dental exit to educate clients on personal oral care.

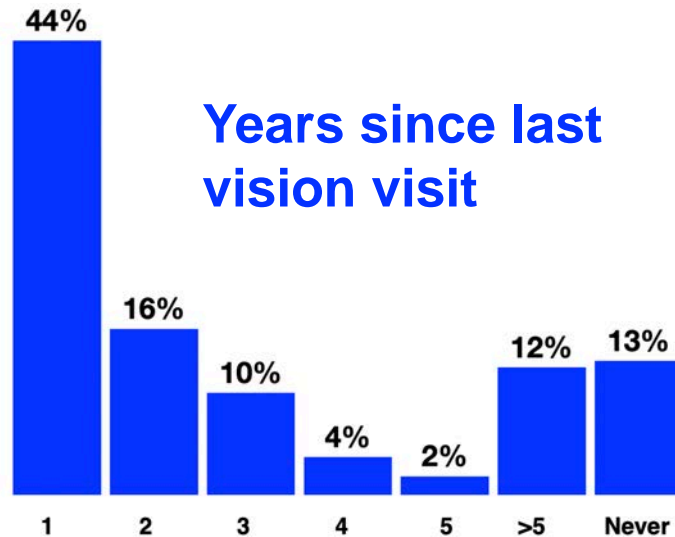
Clients received multiple dental services:

Dental triage exam	143
Bite wing X-rays	22
PA X-rays	119
Prophylaxis	114
Gross Debridement	21
Amalgam 2 surfaces	8
Composite 1 surface	28
Pulp cap	3
Root canal (ant.)	3
Simple extraction	31
Surgical extraction	18
Varnish	115



## VISION SERVICES

Optometrists provided eye exams in 7 vision lanes. Equipment included 7 phoropters, 4 slit lamps, 4 auto refractors, 2 tonometers and 3 lensometers. Free frames were available in a variety of styles for clients to choose. Lens edging equipment was staged in a separate area of the clinic, to manufacture prescription glasses while clients waited. The glasses were completed and most clients had them fitted within an hour after their exam. For extreme corrections beyond the on site fabrication capacity, glasses were made at an off site optical lab and mailed to the clients in the week following the clinic.



41% of clients who responded said they had not had an eye exam for three years or more. Eye exams have an important role at Care Harbor not only to maintain correct vision but also for their diagnostic value in identifying progressive and manageable diseases such as type 2 diabetes or glaucoma.



## HEALTH LITERACY

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Care Harbor's Health Literacy Program is designed to help clients fully understand their health conditions, clinician instructions and self care protocols. The program was developed with the School of Nursing at California State University. It has been expanded since its inception at Care Harbor's November 2017 mega-clinic. It now includes dental and vision health literacy education as well as medical.



The Health Literacy program promotes compliance and favorable outcomes for Care Harbor clients. Following their medical, dental or vision exams and treatments, clients were directed to separate stations at each service exit, where registered nurses and final year nursing students reviewed their charts, answered their questions, and ensured that clients fully understood what clinicians

had told them. The relaxed, informal discussion at these sessions empowers clients to become more active partners in their own care. The program is an important asset for those who will not have timely access to a healthcare professional after they leave the Care Harbor clinic.

Visual aids including anatomical models, graphics and printed take home materials expand client understanding and strengthen retention. For patients diagnosed with diabetes, free glucometers and test strips were provided, along with instructions for their use. If other healthcare resources at the clinic were of value to the clients, they were directed or escorted to them.



## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

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Care Harbor has a dual goal in providing mental health resources at our free clinics. The first is to respond to a major need among the vulnerable populations we serve, who experience high levels of stress, depression and other emotional issues. The second goal is to combat the social stigma often attached to mental health issues, discouraging those in need from seeking the help that is available to them.

We are working toward these goals by making mental health a prominent feature of Care Harbor clinics, as visible and accessible a part of the healthcare spectrum as medical, dental and vision care. The need has an increased urgency among veterans, who have a high incidence of PTSD, depression and substance abuse disorder.



Screening questions were included in the intake triage interview to help identify need and alert clients to the availability of care. The L.A. County Department of Mental Health took part in the Healthcare for Veterans event, staffing an educational station on the clinic floor to provide information and referrals to County programs.

DMH professionals were also on site to provide personal counseling and referrals to clients requesting assistance. Two private consultation rooms, isolated from the main clinic floor, were constructed to afford privacy for client interviews.



## **COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

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These community partners made the Healthcare for Veterans free clinic possible.

### **Presenting Sponsor**

**Good Hope Medical Foundation**

### **Gold Community Partners**

**Western University of Health Sciences**

**QueensCare**

**Healing California**

**Power of Sight**

### **Silver Community Partners**

**Kaiser-Permanente**

**L.A. Care Health Plan**

**El Pollo Loco**

**Patterson Companies, Inc.**

**VSP Global**

**Dunkin'**

**L.A. County Department of Public Health**

**L.A. County Department of Mental Health**

**L.A. County Department of Public Social Services**