

**Oregon's Coordinated Care Model Summit:
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Yamhill Community Care Organization – Connecting Health and Early Learning

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Diana Bianco

This next story really goes to reaching out into the community. It's about connecting health and early learning. Now we all know that health and education are closely intertwined. Both impact each other. Good health means children are ready to learn. Good education we know can lead to better health outcomes. Now many have you probably know that just as we have CCOs based locally throughout the state, we also have early learning hubs focused on coordinating services for children and their families. Now down in Yamhill County, which is the next story we're going to hear about, the CCO actually sponsored the application for the Early Learning Hub knowing how important that collaboration and that partnership was. So we're going to hear about today, how that's been working and how it all started. We have Suey Linzmeier, who is a member of the CCO Board down in Yamhill. She is also co-chair of the Early Learning Council. She'll tell us a bit about the CCO's thinking behind this decision to really get so close with the Early Learning Hub. Kyra Donovan who is the other co-chair of the Early Learning Council will share some of the emerging initiatives. And then Lindsey Manfrin, who works in Yamhill's Public Health Department, also serves on the CAC's Clinical Advisory Panel and is also a member of the Yamhill Early Learning Hub. So you can see how it all comes together. She will share her perspective on the importance of this collaboration. We're going to start with Suey.

Suey Linzmeier

Thank you. I've been in early learning in Yamhill County for the last eight years. About 18 months ago I was asked to join the board of the Yamhill Community Care Organization. Other than CAC members, I am the only person on that board who doesn't have a direct connection to health. So it's been an interesting ride. I was chosen and actually asked to be a part of that group, because I work primarily with children who are Medicaid eligible. Also at that time our CCO's main, I guess 70 percent of their population that they were working with, were children. There was a real connection there for me to be a part of that group. It was also around that time that the YCCO began to have conversations about the parallels between our community's health systems and our education systems. It was really because both of those systems in our community were beginning a new focus which was strengthening outcomes for the members through collaboration efficiencies, prevention and intervention.

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Some community members (ourselves) were already discussing some of those possibilities that could come from meshing early learning and YCCO activities because of our shared participants and also some of the conversations that were happening at the state level in early learning and in health systems. Initially the CCO in Yamhill County was a little bit worried about bringing early learning as another focus to the YCCO just because it might dilute or distract from all the intensive work that they were doing. One of the strongest concerns that I heard at that time, when we were discussing should the group take on early learning, was that the results of prevention and intervention in early childhood can take a very long time to see the outcomes, sometimes an entire childhood. Because the YCCO really had to demonstrate economic outcomes in a very short amount of time, we really wondered if those longer time frames for seeing effectiveness or change would really work for the YCCO. We came to the realization that we had to think flexibly. We do a lot of that in Yamhill County. We thought a little bit deeper and realized that we have that opportunity now to change habits for people with early experiences. We know that those can hopefully have a long, a lifelong impact on how people care for themselves and use their health care systems as adults. We're hoping that we can start some of those practices with young children.

I really believe that our community's interconnectedness allows us to see the possibilities for children and families for creating a healthier future in Yamhill County. I think that by embracing the opportunity to explore connections and develop projects proactively between health and education worlds, we're beginning to strengthen our systems and support not only for Medicaid participants but also for service providers both in health and social services and education fields and our community as a whole. Thank you.

Kyra Donovan

I think I might be the only educator here. I'm not sure. I actually have been in education for 29 years. I taught for 19 years, mostly primary. First grade for a long time. Then I decided that being an elementary principal is a great idea and so I did that for about five years. I currently am the executive director of the elementary programs in McMinnville School District. I became part of this organization in a coffee shop in McMinnville. Lindsey was there with me and so were Suey and a few others. We were talking about – we all serve the same families but we're all doing different things and how confusing that must be for our families. I will tell you that as an educator, we know the health issues of our children and our families but we don't know what to do about it. You all know what to do about it. The kinds of connections that we're making in Yamhill County will make an incredible impact across our county for our children and our families.

I have one quick story to share with you. As an elementary principal (well I thought it would be great to be elementary principal because then all five hundred of them would really be my responsibility). Don't know what I was thinking. We had a student (a first grader). She wasn't participating in her reading group and the teacher was becoming frustrated. I went down and pulled her outside and said what's going on. She wouldn't talk at first. She was a young Latino girl. She spoke only Spanish. I had an interpreter with me and we're trying to figure out what was going on and why was she was being a problem according to some of the others. What we found out is that she had such a severe tooth abscess,

I cannot even imagine the amount of pain that she was in. We called mom. Mom doesn't have transportation. The school was in Lafayette which is a very small community in Yamhill County. We had to wait for mom to be able to at least get there. When mom got there, then we realized that mom also didn't speak any English. They had no health care. They had no way to get to the dentist. My counselor and I decided that we would take some donated funds and we would get this little girl to the dentist. Some way somehow. We got her to the dentist. In fact the school counselor took the mom and the child to the dentist, had her tooth taken care of and then brought her back home. This little girl was struggling in all aspects of schooling. Because of the health care she received, just that one instance, she did get better. She was able to read at grade level by the end of first grade. She wouldn't have been able to do that without the health care she received.

I'm sure you're all sitting there thinking that what we did that day is not sustainable. It did not help long-term change. It helped that family and that child in that one instance. I will tell you that the schools in your community do those kinds of things every day all the time. We don't really know what else to do. We don't have the same meaning of triage that you all do. We do sometimes call it triage. We got to get it fixed. I will tell you that us having our CCO as the backbone organization for our Early Learning Hub in Yamhill County will make incredible differences for our children. We are able to connect our families and our youngest children that have severe needs as quickly as possible because the connections that we've made with organizations across our community.

Health care is a tricky system when you don't live in it. To be able to have education and health care sitting at the same table, has been an incredible experience for us. We know it's going to produce outcomes for our children. Our ELC, our Early Learning Council, we have a pediatrician who sits on our council. As you heard before, Suey and I co-chair the council. Lindsey is part of that council. We also have a librarian. We have a local lawyer. We have all seven school districts in our county are part of that Early Learning Hub. I think that's fairly rare across our state as well. We also serve Grand Ronde Tribes and we have a tribal member that's also part of that ELC. That's just part of the organization. The things that we all bring to the table are very different. That's what builds our collective capacity to make change happen in our community and to be able to sustain that change.

Our state now is talking about an initiative called "Age 3 to Grade 3 Literacy." Our goal in education is that all students are reading at grade level by the end of grade 3. We know the research is very clear that if we can make that happen, our children will be successful for the rest of their lives. We can't do that without you. The partnership that we've been able to build in Yamhill County between early learning and K-12 systems and the health system, I really do believe it's going to make that Age 3 to Grade 3 Initiative come true. I thank you for that.

Lindsey Manfrin

So as mentioned, I really get to see firsthand how intertwined these systems and sectors are. Public health is what I do every day (every day). I also get to be part of Yamhill CCO's Clinical Advisory Panel and the Early Learning Council. As Kyra said, kids can't learn when they're not healthy. When kids aren't learning and achieving academically, we know that their health is going to be affected long-term well into adulthood. It's this terrible cycle that we need to break. To break this cycle, we really need to be thinking about things on a community health and a population health level. That's what's going to get us the long-term and sustained change that we're all looking for. Those long-term good health outcomes and that future reduction in cost.

I'm going to share a story of something that we've done in the CCO and Hub that I think demonstrates some of this coordination effort. One of the things that the Early Learning Hub has done is create a universal referral system for many of our early childhood programs. One of the things that has happened because of this system is a much more collaborative and much stronger communication between early learning providers, between the CCO and with medical providers. We received a referral into the system from a mom who had not engaged in prenatal care yet. We had a home visiting nurse go to her home and check in with her to see how things were going. She found a number of things. She found the mom had tried to try to make prenatal appointments. She couldn't because she didn't have insurance. She tried to get on OHP but a number of system barriers had prevented her from doing so. She had two previous pre-term births. One of which was a micro preemie. At the time of the visit, the nurse checked her blood pressure and it was dangerously high. Of course preeclampsia is what caused the two previous preterm deliveries. The nurse worked very quickly and we were able to work through our partnerships with the CCO and get the mom on the Oregon Health Plan and a prenatal visit the very next day. Last time I shared this story, I said I was really happy to report that mom was still pregnant and doing well. Today I'm even happier to share that mom has delivered a very healthy 38-week little boy. I just heard from the nurse today. She said the little guy and the mom are doing really great so I'm so happy to hear that. I love this story. I love the story for a lot of reasons. One of the reasons is because I think it really demonstrates a CCO and an Early Learning Hub working together to achieve what we are all after. Which is: healthier communities, healthier patients, and lower costs. Thank you.

Diana Bianco

Thank you. Thank you so much.