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## CareOregon invests \$455,000 in community-based organizations working to address health disparities

*Funding supports eight Portland-area organizations using Traditional Health Workers to provide culturally specific care, support and health care navigation*

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**Portland, Ore.** — In an effort to address health disparities among communities of color and other groups impacted by discrimination, CareOregon announced today that it is investing \$455,000 in eight Portland-area organizations that provide culturally specific care and support to area residents. Funds will be used to help cover costs associated with using Traditional Health Workers to support our neighbors on their path to health.

“The data is stark. Communities impacted by racism and other structures of oppression aren’t connected to the mainstream healthcare system to the same degree as those of the dominant culture and it is taking a toll on their health,” said Jonathan Weedman, Vice President of Population Health at CareOregon. “By investing in Traditional Health Workers, we are investing in our overall community health. I look forward to working alongside these organizations to learn from them about what the community needs and how we, as a health plan, can best support their work.”

Traditional Health Workers play a unique role in the healthcare system. They use their lived experience and specialized training to work one-on-one with individuals and families to remove barriers preventing them from living a healthy life.

“We know that early intervention for families facing houselessness, trauma, and substance misuse is critical for child development,” said Simon Fulford, Executive Director at Parrot Creek Child & Family Services. “Safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments are necessary to prevent family destabilization. That’s why our team of Traditional Health Workers are such a valuable resource for families needing help to navigate the path to sober living. Our Children & Mother’s program gives our community’s children the opportunity to reach their full potential. CareOregon funding will help us ensure that our Traditional Health Workers have the support they need to best serve our families.”



By providing services in a way that is culturally relevant, in a patient's preferred language, and responsive to their unique circumstances, Traditional Health Workers build deep, trusting relationships with the folks they serve.

"Human Solutions knows from experience that trusted relationships with program participants are key to better outcomes," said Hillary Houck, Chief Program Officer, Human Solutions. "We are thrilled to be partnering with CareOregon to add a family support specialist to our housing team who has the time, expertise and lived experience to help families identify and reach health goals, which, in turn, enhance their overall quality of life."

The goal of this grant program is to provide fiscal support for community-based organizations working to improve health equity, create opportunities for organizations to learn from each other by sharing best practices, and for CareOregon to learn from these partners about how we can best sustain their work moving forward.

Grants this cycle help fund Traditional Health Worker activities taking place in 2021. CareOregon will announce additional investments to support their activities in 2022 later this year.

"Our partnership with CareOregon will help Familias continue building and supporting Community Health Worker programming and services," said Izzy Ventura Meda, Executive Director of Familias en Accion. "CareOregon and Familias recognize the crucial role Traditional Health Workers and the individuals behind these titles have in community health and health equity."

Grantees include:

- [\*\*Asian Health & Services Center\*\*](#) (**\$50,000**) will use funds to hire additional staff to expand their Traditional Health Worker program—increasing support for Asian seniors in our community who may be dealing with isolation and/or need help accessing health or social services.
- [\*\*Douglas Latinas International\*\*](#) (**\$45,000**) will use funding to hire additional staff and train new Doulas Latinas to expand culturally specific programming available to pregnant low-income Latino families in the Portland metro area, as well as begin an investigation of how trauma and emotional health can affect birth outcomes.
- [\*\*Familias en Accion\*\*](#) (**\$80,000**) will use funding to expand their community health worker program and build the capacity of staff through education and related supports. They aim to advance the health equity for Oregon's Latino population by removing barriers to health and helping families access the supports they need to thrive.
- [\*\*Human Solutions\*\*](#) (**\$65,000**) will use funding to hire a Family Support Specialist to work proactively with families living in permanent supportive housing. This new position will collaborate with other on-site staff to help residents identify physical and behavioral health needs and goals and connect them to the services they want. This added layer of support is key for residents to move forward toward their life goals.



- [Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization](#) (\$65,000) will use funding to support the hiring of a one bilingual/bicultural Russian speaking Health Navigation Specialist who will provide outreach to the Slavic and Eastern European communities in the Portland metro region. They will provide direct supportive services to decrease health care access barriers and enhance individual/family/community support.
- [Native American Youth and Family Center](#) (\$60,000) will use funding to increase the capacity of their Community Health Worker program. Grant funds will enable the Lead CHW to focus their time on cultural approaches to healthcare and engaging the community, as well as allow the organization to create a management role for the CHW team.
- [Parrot Creek Child & Family Services](#) (\$40,000) will use funding to support their Children and Mother's Program, which helps clients enroll in community support services to stay clean and sober, obtain needed healthcare services, and stabilize their lives so their children can remain with, or be returned to, their care. Funding will be applied across programming including three certified Peer Recovery Counselors and two former clients who will gain Certified Recovery Mentor certification through this program.
- [Straightway Services](#) (\$50,000) will use funding to hire an additional Community Health Worker to support their houseless community outreach program and integrate new technology to improve data and outcomes tracking. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Straightway Services has seen a marked increase in request for food, clothing, and houseless outreach support due to rising economic insecurity experienced by our region's African American community.

These grants are part of CareOregon's Community Giving Program. In the past 10 years, we have invested over \$10 million into non-profit organizations serving Oregonians in need. CareOregon is proud to be recognized as a Top Philanthropist in Oregon by the Portland Business Journal for five years in a row. More information about our giving program is available here: <https://careoregon.org/about-us/community-giving-grants>.

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### About CareOregon

For more than 25 years, CareOregon has offered health services and community benefit programs to Oregon Health Plan members. Today, we support the needs of 450,000 Oregonians through three coordinated care organizations, a Medicare Advantage plan, a Tribal Care Coordination program, a dental care organization, and in-home medical care with Housecall Providers. CareOregon members have access to integrated physical, dental and mental health care, and substance use treatment. We believe that good health requires more than clinics and hospitals, so we also connect members to housing, fresh food, education and transportation services. CareOregon is a mission-driven, community-based nonprofit with offices in Portland, Medford and Seaside, Oregon.

