



# Howard Brown addresses financial turnaround, expanding services

by Tony Merevick on April 16, 2012 in News ·

Howard Brown Health Center held a state of the institution briefing with press Monday, highlighting information regarding the LGBT health center's financial turnaround and plans for expanded services.

As the largest LGBT health organization in the Midwest, HBHC's finances have come under intense scrutiny in recent years, particularly following a federal investigation into the misuse of grant money. As a result, HBHC is required to pay \$715,000 back to the federal government. However, CEO Jamal Edwards was pleased to announce that despite the payment of debts and the expansion of some services, the organization has seen "remarkable" financial improvements, he said.

An audit conducted by independent accounting firm, Crowe Horwath LLP, shows that HBHC saw a \$1.2 million surplus in the fiscal year 2011, up nearly \$4 million from a \$2.1 million deficit in fiscal year 2010. In addition, the audit found that HBHC's new asset value, which is used to measure an organization's assets less its liabilities, improved from negative \$821,000 (FY 2010) into the black at \$369,000 (FY 2011).

"These positive financial markers confirm that Howard Brown Health Center is stronger than it's been in quite some time," Edwards said. "Through sound financial oversight, new safeguards and new revenue opportunities, we will be able [sic] improve and increase our services to provide health care to more patients."

HBHC's outlook for 2012 sees the continued trend of the last 20 months of improvement. So far, the organization has recorded an \$807,000 surplus for fiscal year 2012, and the net asset position as of Feb. 29 was over \$1.1 million. These positive results are enabling the organization to repay debt and expand services, said Lowell B. Raven, senior director, finance and accounting & controller.

"We are very proud to bring you these incredible financial results," Raven said. "The agency has come a long way. We have significantly improved our bottom line."

HBHC has also posted the full FY 2011 audit results [online](#), which noted deficiencies throughout HBHC's operation. The audit indicates that there was little control over donated goods to their Brown Elephant retail stores, too few audits of companywide fixed assets due to limited staffing, and noted that there was a significant deficiency in the way that HBHC reported clinical trial progress and revenues. HBHC said they would implement corrective action plans to address the deficiencies, according to the audit.

"Our fiscal year '11 report is on our website, thereby ensuring that the remarkable results of fiscal year 2011 are open and available to the general public, ensuring the transparency of the agency results," Raven said.

Earlier this month, Edwards [told](#) Chicago Phoenix that HBHC plans to move and expand its TRIAD Practice clinic to a standalone location on North Halsted Street. The move, planned for later this year, is meant to increase visibility and double the capacity of the clinic to see nearly 5,000 patients and open a pharmacy to bring in additional revenue from prescriptions. The new location will also offer dental services, alternative insemination services, pediatric care (including childbirth) and increased geriatric care.

"For the first time in our history, we're able to present to the community a place where parents of any sexual orientation and their children can get their primary health care," said Dr. Magda Houlberg, chief medical officer and vice president, clinical services for HBHC. "This facility will allow us to meet the demand for quality health care, diversify services and introduce an interdisciplinary approach to health care that will enable us to see twice as many patients as before – from birth to throughout their entire life cycle."

Edwards said the most important thing to realize about the expanded services is that HBHC will achieve them with modest additional expenses. Another portion of the presentation focused on expanding not just services, but access to services throughout the city; particularly, bringing more services to the communities on the South and West sides of the city.

HBHC already deploys mobile care providers to bring services to the community, and according to both Edwards and Vice President, Administration Will Raj, they will continue to increase and expand those methods with the help of tablet computers.

“We want to be able to meet patients where their needs are, as opposed to having them come here,” Edwards said.

Kristin Keglovitz-Baker, director of clinical operations, announced the rollout of an online portal for patients to access portions of their medical records and securely discuss their health with their doctors online. For patients who do not have access to computers at home, HBHC plans to create a computer kiosk in the lobby of the Sheridan Road site, 4025 N. Sheridan Rd. Edwards noted that with the push for digital communication among doctors and patients, old-fashioned one on one appointments will continue to be the core of the practice.

“We are employing an interdisciplinary care model,” she said. “When it comes to health, as we all know there’s many aspects of our health. There’s our medical and physical health and wellbeing, there’s also spiritual and psychological, and one of the ways an interdisciplinary model really works is to be able to approach the patient from all of those ways and be able to help them and improve their health outcomes.”

Keglovitz-Baker added that data will steer the organization to address additional areas of need.

For first time in their history, the organization is positioned to bring services to 54 out of the 57 zip codes in Chicago, said Edwards.

**“I’m so proud of what this organization has been able to accomplish, and even prouder that it’s located in my district,” said state Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago), who has been a longtime ally of HBHC. “Many of our community members now call Howard Brown Health Center their primary care provider of choice, instead of the only option they have.”**

HBHC served about 9,000 patients and provided more than 36,500 primary care visits during FY 2011. In 2012, patient growth has continued to grow, in some cases up to over 10 percent.