The Medical Care and Access Working Group seeks to help support the health needs of direct service providers and impacted populations without health care access. Of interest are vulnerable sub-populations, including older adults, people experiencing homelessness, people who are immunocompromised, low-income communities, and other marginalized populations. In our conversations with our nonprofit partners and stakeholders, we have identified several of the most current critical needs specifically for medical care and access. The most immediate needs center around direct financial assistance to Federally Qualified Health Centers and nonprofit community clinics to cover their financial obligations, support for the acquisition and equitable distribution of personal protective equipment, support services targeting relief and assistance for health care providers and other essential frontline workers, mental health support services for essential frontline workers and vulnerable communities, and advocacy efforts.

Our immediate goals are to:

- Support Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and other community-based health care providers of primary care services in underserved areas.
- Provide support for the development and acquisition of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Provide direct employee support to health care providers and other essential frontline staff, including transportation assistance, childcare assistance, meal assistance, and mental health and wellness support.
- Increase access to mental health support services to health care providers and vulnerable communities.
- Support advocacy efforts to address localized health care issues.

Given our current knowledge of immediate needs for providers and the medical care community, the Medical Care and Access Working Group’s initial funding priorities will include:

- Financial support to FQHCs and community-based health care providers, whose businesses are struggling due to social distancing mandates, to pay for expenses like rent, utilities, and staff-related costs.
- The purchase of equipment, including software, for health care providers and patients to conduct online learning, telemedicine, case management, or other means of increasing access to medical care.
- Efforts to assist workers or businesses in creating temporary and immediate opportunities to support the region’s medical community, including centralized acquisition of PPE, development of blood donation centers, and providing individual support services for health care providers.
- Financial support to mental health providers to increase access to mental health care.
- Financial support for advocacy campaigns addressing localized health care issues in direct response to COVID-19. Advocacy efforts funded must begin in the next 12 weeks, and opportunities that will have a quick impact on local communities will receive priority for funding.

As the situation unfolds, we expect the working group’s priorities to evolve and shift. In addition to our work outlined above, we are coordinating with federal, county, and local government response to complement and align our efforts. We are also working with our advocacy partners to ensure that what we are learning about the needs of our region’s health care providers and the vulnerable groups impacted by the COVID-19 crisis are included in the response.