



# SafetyWeb Network Project for Free & Charitable Clinics: Data Snapshot

ABC for Health, Inc.

March 2024

## Snapshot of the Project

The SafetyWeb Network for Free & Charitable Clinics is an exciting new project to help evaluate and connect patients at select free and charitable clinics to health coverage and care.

Together, ABC for Health, Inc., the WI Association of Free and Charitable Clinics, technology partner My Coverage Plan, Inc. and 10 participating clinics are serving low-income, uninsured, or underinsured patients that face legal and administrative obstacles to health coverage and care.

Many patients of free and charitable clinics are eligible but not enrolled in Medicaid, health coverage, insurance programs, or community resources. With support, these patients can better overcome knowledge barriers, access challenges, and other bureaucratic red tape.

The collaboration is a game-changing project that links clinics to ABC for Health's direct legal services and technology. Below is a snapshot of patient referral data to date, since the first patient was referred on March 1, 2023:



### Referrals

804 Served  
541 Adults  
263 Children



### Income

25% No Income  
32% <100% FPL  
33% <200% FPL  
10% >200%



### Primary Language

41% English  
55% Spanish  
4% Other



### Race/Ethnicity

28% White  
15% Black  
2% Asian  
55% Hispanic/Mixed/Other



### Benefits Obtained/ Maintained

250+ Households  
Connected to New  
Benefits



### Benefits Secured

BadgerCare Plus  
Emergency Medicaid  
FoodShare  
Financial Assistance  
SSI/SSDI  
Private Insurance/Marketplace  
Medicare  
Other Benefits/Community  
Programs



### Medical Debt\*

\$993,869 Disclosed  
\$548,931 Eliminated  
*\*More applications are still  
pending*

## Project Impact

Patients referred by free and charitable clinics regularly remind us of the impact of the SafetyWeb Network Project. Many patients disclose feeling excluded from the traditional health care setting and legal services due to language gaps, cultural barriers, or racism. System-wide knowledge barriers blocked many patients from available Medicaid, financial assistance, or other coverage options under the law. Moreover, similar systemic issues often deterred patients from speaking up due to race, ethnicity, or immigration status. Many feared jeopardizing their immigration status or otherwise “raising a red flag” of their existence in a community.

Our SafetyWeb Network partners helped patients overcome the feelings of exclusion that negatively impacted their health care, the health of their children, and the health of their communities. Through this project, we helped to elevate patient voices, and stand with them in enforcing their legal and human rights.

*“I am so grateful for all that you do! Thanks for helping my patients and being advocates for them, it is so encouraging when they are filled with hope that they can at least get a huge burden lifted from their shoulders.”* - Free Clinic Staff

Our project serves some of the lowest-income patients in Wisconsin and the Latino community. Consistently, ~60% of patients referred by clinics have been Spanish-speaking families who listed their ethnicity as Hispanic/Latino. Many of these families are undocumented, or mixed-status households.

For individual patients, like “Graciela,” (name changed to protect privacy), the SafetyWeb Network for Free & Charitable Clinics’ assistance changed the trajectory of her life. Graciela’s doctor insisted that she needed surgery. Her Free Clinic helped her identify a hospital and provider for the necessary medical procedure – with a very narrow window for a pre-op visit with the actual surgery scheduled for January 2024. Yet, red tape in the form of “Medicaid Unwinding” rules indicated that Graciela’s medical coverage through BadgerCare would terminate on December 31, 2023. Her immigration status restricted her renewal options. Graciela faced a \$60,000 surgery without any insurance or coverage. Graciela could not afford the bills and prepared to cancel the procedure. Enter the SafetyWeb Network Project. ABC’s legal team carefully evaluated and analyzed Graciela’s Medicaid coverage to establish that County Income Maintenance workers failed to follow the proper State of Wisconsin renewal and unwinding rules. The ABC team identified procedural and legal errors that led her coverage to incorrectly terminate in December of 2023 instead of the proper date of March 2024. After ABC’s intervention, the provider scheduled the fully covered surgery for Graciela. She entered 2024 focused on her health instead of lingering health issues and the prospect of medical bills.

The SafetyWeb Project intervenes at critical moments of health care need to help patients and families assert their rights and eligibility for health coverage programs, including hospital financial assistance programs. It helps them challenge wrongfully terminated or denied health coverage and services. Many families live with the additional burden of medical debt and collections, compounded by fear and inflexible bureaucracies. One patient, recently diagnosed with cancer, refused to go to the hospital because he simply could not bear the burden of medical debt. Others could not even communicate with a Spanish speaker at a hospital and assumed that financial assistance programs were not available for non-English-speaking patients. Others deferred needed medical care due to cost only to end up needing emergency care and with even bigger bills. The SafetyWeb Project addresses a huge area of unmet legal and interpretive needs from patients needing help with medical care and coverage and fighting an unforgiving bureaucracy.



Brynne McBride, Dani Wetter, & Bobby Peterson at the 2023 WAFCC Summit  
Photo Credit: Courtney Roofe

## Technology Development

SafetyWeb Network technical partner My Coverage Plan Inc., along with subject matter experts at ABC for Health and input from clinic staff, developed and deployed FirstCheck WI, the web application screening tool built and modified for specific use by free & charitable clinic partners. The tool uses decision support technology to help clinic staffers guide patients, the user/interviewee, through a simple interview with questions about household, income, coverage, and other demographics. The technology helps distill and apply the information from patients into both health insurance/coverage and referral recommendations. The tool promotes efficiency and process improvement into our project, while also building sustainability.



We launched a “sandbox” version of the tool in October and solicited user feedback from clinics. On November 27, FirstCheck WI went live! We currently receive patient referrals with very positive feedback from clinics! One clinic wrote “Everything [in FirstCheck] looks great and flows smoothly! And the fillable form is wonderful too! Thank you for all your hard work on this.” We expect to continue to make tool enhancements, keeping security and privacy in mind. For 2024 we expect to upgrade our training process and platform. We will work toward introducing our Gurulz Learning Management System in 2024.

## Clinic Feedback

Clinics strongly support the projects legal and advocacy expertise and extended gratitude for the sophisticated help ABC staff provides for the clinics and patients. We issued an “End of Year” Survey to clinics to solicit feedback. All of the clinics described the project as positively changing clinic workflow for vulnerable patients, creating new referral pathways, & improving their overall patient services. Here are just a few comments:

- “I just wanted to add that the standard of service you and your staff provide continues to blow me away. Working with many community organizations, I sometimes feel like I am pulling teeth in order to get a patient access to a service that they need. Working with your team is refreshing and inspiring. You are always looking for additional ways to help patients, expand services offered, and communicate those services in a compassionate and empathetic way.”
- “You not only make our jobs here easier, but you are helping us make our care and services more sustainable for patients. I cannot say enough good things about all of my interactions with your health benefits counselors and training team, so thank you!!”
- “ABC for Health not only gets results faster, but they can find alternate options if someone gets denied for BadgerCare or advocate as to what type of Medicaid the patient qualifies for. Before ABC for Health got involved, I would get stuck if someone was denied BadgerCare or denied financial assistance and that was the limit of my assistance. I appreciate you all!”
- “The SafetyWeb project and the partnership with ABC for Health has been extremely successful in helping my patients obtain health insurance or apply for financial assistance. Many of my patients have multiple factors that affects their ability to think or process a lot of information at once (such as high ACES scores-traumatic events in childhood, limited education, grasp of the English language, feeling overwhelmed or stuck) so having someone alongside them to navigate the complexities of healthcare is crucial.”
- “I am so grateful for you all and I love working with your team. Through the weekly meetings, I have learned a lot about health insurances and other services available that my patients would benefit from, so I am better prepared to provide patients with information and know where to direct them.”