

The Achievable Foundation

It's **achievable**

Summer 2016

From the CEO's Desk: Carmen Ibarra



I recently came across an initiative of the federal Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health entitled "Changing the nation. One story at a time." This web page highlights stories of those that inspire change to create equity in health-care. It got me thinking about what we at Achievable are doing to have a larger impact on the world of healthcare.

One way Achievable is trying to improve this area is by addressing the issue of workforce development. There is currently a shortage of physicians and trained healthcare workers. This is especially true for those trained to care for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD). To address this from a multi-lens perspective, Achievable is hosting a Workforce Development forum in conjunction with Assemblymember Sebastian Ridley-Thomas, West LA College and the Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County.

This forum will bring together colleges, universities, hospitals, policymakers, federally qualified health centers (FQHC) like Achievable, and other institutions from the healthcare and workforce development fields. The goal of the forum is to support policies that facilitate pathways to healthcare jobs and careers at FQHCs; encourage educational systems that work with medical employers to tailor their curriculum to meet the needs of those employers; and create learning opportunities for students within FQHCs and hospitals.

Our ultimate goal is to increase the number of healthcare professionals trained to address the complex healthcare needs of those with I/DD, and thus reduce the health disparities in our community, one story at a time. The forum will take place on Wednesday, October 19, 2016 at West LA College.

What is a Medical Home? The Achievable Health Center!

Integrating medical, behavioral and mental health services all in one location makes The Achievable Health Center a "medical home" for our patients.

A medical home is the place that coordinates your complete medical care – a place that knows you, understands your medical history, and helps you make smart health decisions; where test results, medical needs and mental health support are comprehensively considered and treated.

Dr. Michelle Catanzarite, Achievable's Chief Medical Officer, explains, "Nobody is looking at medical care in a focused, coordinated manner. We want to share our model with others, because it's making a difference in the lives of those with intellectual and developmental disabilities."

Congresswoman Karen Bass Visits The Achievable Health Center



Healthcare providers, local officials, advocates, patients and their families gathered at The Achievable Foundation's Summer Speaker Program on Wednesday, June 29, 2016. Congresswoman Karen Bass and Dr. Clarissa Kripke (UCSF Clinical Professor of Family and Community Medicine) spoke about the future of health-care for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), a medically vulnerable population served by The Achievable Health Center.

Congresswoman Bass, (D-CA), toured Achievable, an innovative new model for community health centers focusing on individuals with I/DD, which is co-located with the Westside Regional Center. Dr. Kripke presented the latest in the field of health care for these patients, highlighting the role centers like Achievable can play to support them as the state continues its move toward community living for these individuals.

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Foundation Spotlight: Michelle Catanzarite, MD

When asked what's best about her job, Dr. Michelle Catanzarite answers "It's fun!" Dr. Catanzarite, a board-certified Family Medicine Physician, became Achievable's Chief Medical Officer (CMO) in early 2015. She provides direct care to a culturally diverse group of patients who range in age from 0 to 65+. Each has distinct needs but the common denominator, and job one for the Achievable Health Center, is having an optimal patient experience.



"We have to anticipate the needs of our patients to make their visit an agreeable one. You want your patients to feel welcomed from the first moment they make contact with the facility, whether they are in the physical space or not: from the website to a phone call to being greeted at arrival," says Dr. Catanzarite. "This is often not the case for patients with an intellectual or developmental disability. Our goal is to inspire the patient's perception that Achievable is my go-to place."

Achievable employs behavioral techniques to help understand our patients' disabilities according to Dr. Catanzarite, "If a patient hates to sit and wait, we have word searches ready to occupy their time to reduce any agitation before meeting with their doctor."

Achievable understands that a patient's social circumstances affect their overall health as situations can be cyclical and feed into one another. For instance, a patient with an intellectual or developmental disability (I/DD) could also be diabetic, and likely poor. These factors are inter-related and therefore impact their overall physical health. Their finances may force their decisions to eat cheaper foods which in turn exacerbates their diabetic condition. But Dr. Catanzarite explains, "At Achievable we address the whole patient and come up with creative solutions to maximize care within their limitations."

Achievable is the first-of-its-kind facility, co-located with a regional center, that provides comprehensive medical and mental health care. Dr. Catanzarite explains, "Psychiatry is part of our model because it leads to a better understanding of what's happening in our patients' lives. We suspected a patient was enduring a difficult home situation. With I/DD, she told different things to different people. Because we have all of her services under one roof, we pieced together the puzzle – the whole picture matters."



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The Achievable Foundation's mission is to improve the quality of life for children and adults living in Los Angeles County who have intellectual and developmental disabilities by providing support and healthcare services, allowing them to live healthy, independent, and productive lives.

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Congresswoman Karen Bass Visits The Achievable Health Center



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Ms. Bass, a longtime champion of quality healthcare for the underserved, noted “Too often the needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are overlooked in traditional health care settings. I appreciate that the Achievable Health Center works to treat the ‘entire patient,’ not just the disability.”

Left Picture: Karen Bass with Achievable Board Member Rebeca Aguirre; Right Picture: James and Marianne Mertzal with Mary Jane and Bob Steiner, Achievable Board Member

Children and adults with I/DD (and their families) often experience higher rates of poverty than the broader population due to lower levels of employment and vastly increased healthcare costs. They also experience higher incidence of chronic health conditions ranging from obesity and depression to seizures and untreated hearing and vision problems. Coordinated support and healthcare services, like those offered at Achievable, can improve their overall quality of life.

