

From the CEO's Desk: Carmen Ibarra



Recently I attended a town hall meeting hosted by Congresswoman Karen Bass. The Congresswoman had brought together a number of panelists to discuss some of the most important issues of today including the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the anti-Immigrant sentiment that is sweeping the nation. As I listened to all of the speakers I tried to understand how Achievable and those we serve could be impacted. This exercise is a bit taxing since policies and proposals at the federal level are rapidly evolving from one minute to the next. In the end, I remembered that we have to start from a basic premise that healthcare is a human right. It is imperative that policies enacted at the federal level allow for equal access to quality healthcare for everyone; ability, socio-economic level, gender identity, religion, and ethnicity/race should not be factors to determine who receives healthcare and who does not.

Having said that I wanted to take a closer look at the impact of the ACA. I am sure you know that Achievable opened its health center in order to address the large unmet health care needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. However, did you know that Achievable's health center got its start because of the ACA? One component of the ACA was the expansion of Federally Qualified Health Centers across the nation (like Achievable). In fact, 70% of our federal grant funding comes from ACA expansion dollars.

Since opening our doors in 2013 we have increased the number of patients seen to 1,500 and we expect to continue our growth by seeing over 2,300 patients by the end of this calendar year. Achievable now employs 16 individuals ranging from physicians to medical assistants. Achievable has also helped create additional jobs through infrastructure projects totaling over \$200,000.

So as you can see the ACA has had a larger impact than most people realize. But, what are the broader implications of dismantling the ACA? Here are just a few things:

- Across the country we could once again see the number of uninsured Americans grow by 28 million.
- In California, 1 in 7 people receive their care at a community health center; access to this care would be jeopardized if the ACA is dismantled.
- Those with pre-existing conditions may be denied coverage or their coverage may become prohibitively expensive.

The ACA has provided greater access to healthcare, it has created jobs, and has boosted the economy by funding infrastructure projects. It is important that we all work together to improve the ACA rather than get rid of it. Here is what you can do to help us fight against ACA repeal:

- Participate in the ACA Anniversary March on March 23rd in Downtown LA.
- Call or email your Senator and Member of Congress to let them know how important the ACA is.
 - To find your Senator go to: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/contact/>
 - To find your Congressman go to: <http://www.house.gov/htbin/findrep>

Story of Hope: Adoptive Parents Find Care at Achievable

As a young woman, **Cornelia Hewitt, a physical therapist from Switzerland, had started a program in Kyrgyzstan to assess and treat children in orphanages who had been neglected**—many had intellectual and developmental disabilities. Cornelia and her American husband adopted a baby, a healthy little boy, but she still spent every day at the orphanage. “You can’t help but fall in love with some of the kids,” she says. “One of them started calling me ‘Mommy’; I just couldn’t let him stay there.”

The Hewitts adopted Kanybek, who was three at the time. They knew their son had special needs, but they didn’t know the extent of his disabilities. Then they moved to Santa Monica to care for her husband’s elderly parents. For several years, Kanybek was treated at a family clinic; the waits were often long and they never saw the same doctor.



When they first arrived in the U.S., Kanybek had been diagnosed with cerebral palsy, but there were other symptoms. “I really wanted to know what was wrong with my son. I had been referred to a neurologist at Children’s Hospital (L.A.), but the paperwork and parking were just overwhelming.”

Cornelia was referred to the Achievable Health Center by her case worker at the Westside Regional Center. Dr. Ari Zeldin, Achievable’s pediatric neurologist, conducted testing which resulted in a new diagnosis: Kanybek had schizencephaly, a rare birth defect of the brain.

“It’s so helpful working with doctors who understand disabilities. At Achievable, we can get both primary and neurological care. And the doctors communicate with one another; you don’t have to start from zero each time. It saves you a lot of appointments.”

Now Cornelia, her husband, and her younger son are all Achievable patients. “I can come in and give blood, while the little one has his annual check-up and Kanybek sees the neurologist. And I like that it’s convenient to the Regional Center, so I can combine visits with other appointments. I can pop in quickly to see my case worker. Paperwork, pickups – it’s all so practical. It saves me days.”

“In the beginning, you’re trying to take care of basic needs. Just having people who understand how to navigate things like insurance and in-home health services is so comforting. Here, I have people I can talk normally to...I feel like I’m home; it’s my haven. I’m taken care of as a mother and as a whole family, and that’s very, very, very precious.”

THANK YOU to the Supporters Who Make a Difference

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Foundation Spotlight: Leticia Lozano, Health Center Manager



Behind every great medical team is a great operations team. As the Health Center Manager of the Achievable Health Center, Leticia Lozano keeps the medical center humming efficiently so patients can experience the quality care they are seeking. Leticia operates on the front lines of the Health Center, doing anything and everything to ensure patients have a smooth experience from the very first time they walk in the door.

Her role requires a nimble approach that changes direction quickly: from setting up the clinic, to coordinating schedules of the 10+ team of medical assistants and doctors, to helping unforeseen walk-in patients fit into the day's schedule, all the while ensuring crucial back office functions like payroll, vital supplies needed for medical care, and employee trainings never miss a beat.

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News from the Field

For millions of children who qualify for special education services in U.S. public schools, the outcome of a case heard by the Supreme Court last month may drastically alter the road map of their school careers. Since 1975, when Congress enacted the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), federal funds have gone to support a tailored special education plan for each child in public school who qualifies. Now up for debate is what level of specialized services the schools must provide. Basic access or something more?



On one side is the substantial cost of providing individualized services, which could increase dramatically under this ruling. The defendant, the Douglas County School District, has argued that they provided the plaintiff “some educational benefit,” and that Congress has not specified a specific standard, just a process to arrive at the appropriate benefits. The National School Board Association further claims that the federal government has historically provided less money for special education than promised.

On the other side is the right to a meaningful education for children with special needs. The plaintiff in the case has argued that their son is entitled to “a free appropriate public education” as is stated in the IDEA. They have further claimed that the services provided by the school district are the bare minimum. The courts have never definitively decided what the standard is for this IDEA requirement.

With a majority of Supreme Court Justices seeming to favor bolstering the standards of special education in public schools, parents and schools await the outcome and what that may mean for the quality of the “free appropriate public education” promised under existing law. Stay tuned for this impactful decision and how that will play out at the local level.

Achievable is hiring medical providers!!

If you are interested in being part of a team innovating a new model of care for vulnerable populations, especially individuals with developmental disabilities, go to our website to apply:
<https://achievable.org/contact-us/join-our-team/>



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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Foundation Spotlight: Leticia Lozano, Health Center Manager

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With a background as a medical assistant herself, Leticia went on to earn her nursing license while working full-time, before starting in a managerial capacity in 2008. "When I come to work now, I feel I make a difference," she says about her experience since moving to Achievable in 2014. In that time, she has seen the patient capacity more than double, and as the word about patient experiences spread, the center has attracted new providers.

"Achievable is different than other health centers. We're focusing on the whole patient and all of their needs, and helping wherever we can to make sure they have access to great care. Sometimes we help our patients outside our medical center – we assist our patients in getting other appointments, or link them to a specialist, or other resources," Leticia explains.

The high demand for services is both a challenge and reward. Leticia moves mountains to try to accommodate the ever-increasing amount of walk-in patients, working with the talented team of doctors and medical assistants to prioritize urgent cases and ensure no one is turned away. "It's great to see that we're growing and adding new providers to be able to meet the demands of the population we serve," says Leticia.

One of Achievable's hallmarks is taking time with patients and having open dialogue to develop a comprehensive picture of their needs. Patient appointments range from 30-60 minutes, compared with an industry standard of 15-20. Leticia thinks this is central to one of her favorite parts of her role – hearing patients' feedback about how well the doctors listen and how the care at Achievable is different than at other offices. "It puts into perspective that you are doing what you came here to do," she says.