

Understanding the UPMC Health Plan Neighborhood Center's Role in Community Well-Being

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BACKGROUND

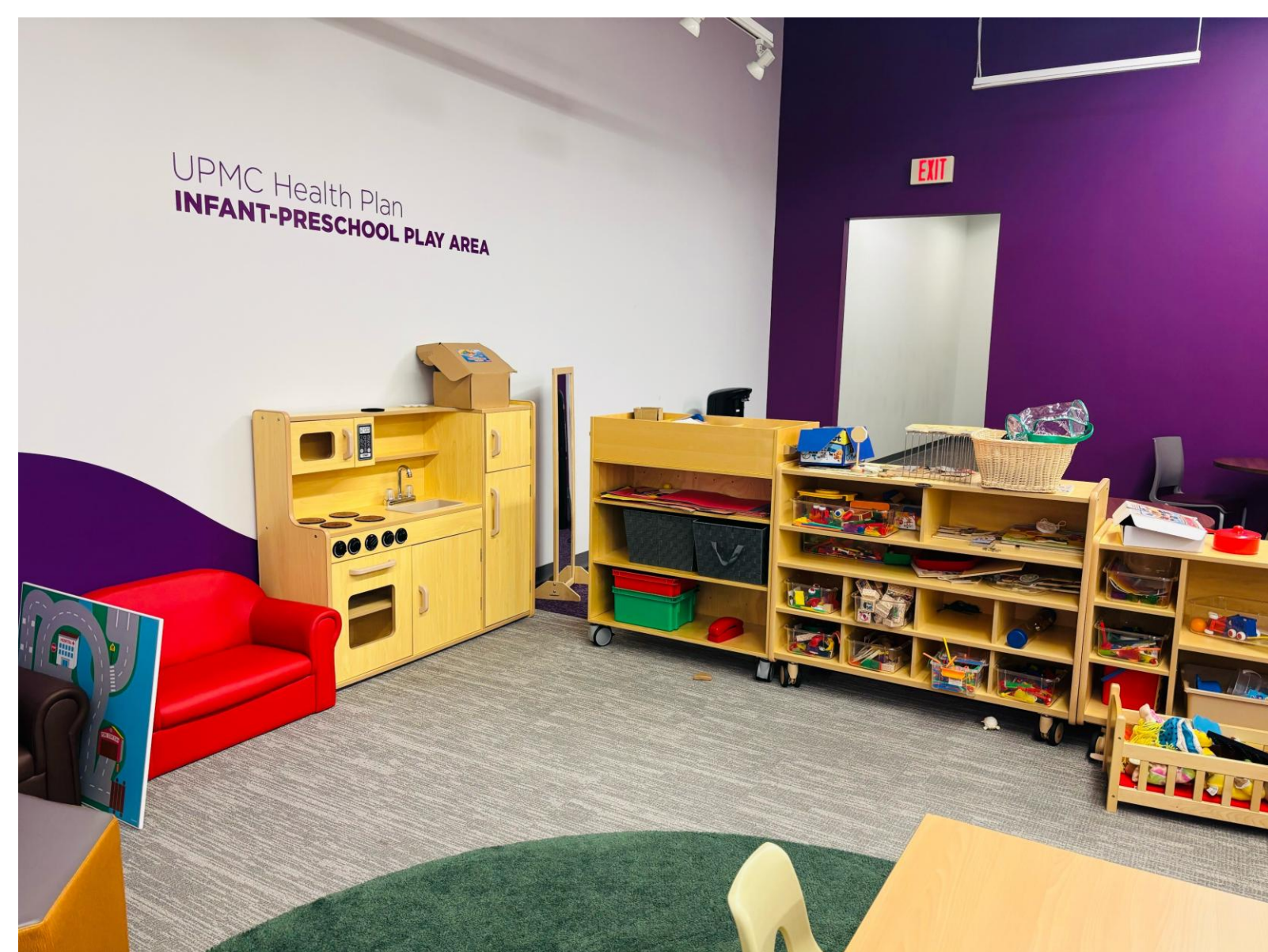
The UPMC Health Plan Neighborhood Center, opened in December 2022 at 6401 Penn Ave in Pittsburgh, is a community hub offering services beyond traditional healthcare. By including social determinants of health navigation, telehealth suites, and onsite community partners, the Center seeks to provide support for diverse needs. Positioned at the intersection of the East Liberty, Larimer, and Homewood neighborhoods, the Center is located conveniently to the 86, 88, and P1 bus lines; a pharmacy; and a pediatric provider. The Health Plan placed the Center at the intersection of these neighborhoods with the goal of serving communities which have experienced gentrification and public policies which have led to a loss of resources.

OBJECTIVES

- Explore how the Neighborhood Center's unique model, by focusing on community well-being and social support, changes traditional ways people get healthcare.
- Pinpoint the most effective features of the Center that help diverse community members connect with services.
- Understand how the Center's partnerships with various community groups expand its reach and the types of help it offers residents.

METHODS

- **Quantitative Data:** Reviewed quantitative data regarding utilization of the Center.
- **Qualitative Research Design and Collection:** Employed an exploratory qualitative approach, synthesizing insights from semi-structured interviews.
- **Participant Recruitment:** Conducted 8 interviews with key stakeholders involved with the Center:
 - Health Plan Leadership
 - Partner Organizations
 - Center Staff
- **Data Analysis:** Interview data was systematically analyzed for recurring themes, key findings, and illustrative quotes, providing a multi-perspective understanding of the Center's role.



UPMC Health Plan Neighborhood Center Infant-Preschool Play Area



RESULTS

Key Themes

Enhanced Access & Engagement

• **Increased Accessibility:** The center's physical presence in the community brings UPMC Health Plan services to an easily accessible location.

"I have customers who can walk to my place from their homes, and I have customers who can easily get off the bus" (Interview 7)

• **Referral Growth:** Davis Consulting Solutions reported an increase to 8-9 referrals per month for employment services.

• **Community-Driven Program Development:**

"Continuing to listen to teach individual community's need because it's all different" (Interview 5)

Community-Led & Collaborative Model

• **Partnership Hub:** Acts as a central meeting point for community organizations (e.g., Literacy Pittsburgh), fostering collaboration and allowing partners to spread their information and services.

• **Non-Profit Support:** Provides a valuable, often free, physical space for non-profit organizations and partners who may lack financial resources for venues.

Holistic Service Delivery

• **Preventative Care:** Successfully hosts immunization clinics and dental days.

• **Family-Centric Support:** Provides community baby showers and dedicated maternity care management.

• **Critical On-site Childcare:**

"the things that is wonderful about the neighborhood center... is the childcare area because one of the biggest barriers we see with Medicaid families is that if they have more than one child, if they have multiple children, they can't bring those children with them to appointments" (Interview 1).

• **Addressing Social Determinants of Health:** Offers workshops on homeownership, financial engagement, and workforce development (e.g., UPMC Pathways to Work, PA Women's Work, PA CareerLink).

• **Resource Navigation:** Serves as a "beacon for help and resources," linking individuals directly to local family support centers, food banks, and other essential services.

"get you all of the resources that you needed, all the assistance that you need Point A and Point Z and get you all of the resources that you needed, not the assistance that you needed by, you know, one stop, so" (Interview 3).

Diverse Population Reach

• **Inclusive Approach:** Serves "all populations and all people," from new mothers to seniors, offering programs like workforce development and exercise classes.

• **Language Accessibility:** Provides phone interpretation services for various languages and dialects.

Table 1. UPMC Health Plan Neighborhood Center: Monthly Partner Service Data (Jan-Jun 2025)

	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	Apr 2025	May 2025	Jun 2025	Average / Month
Total Number of People Served	38	82	42	49	0	47	43.0
Total Number of UPMC Members Served	0	2	6	0	10	0	3.0
Number of Partners Reporting	7	8	6	8	7	7	
Average Served Per Partner	5.4	10.3	7.0	6.1	0.0	6.7	
Average UPMC Members Served Per Partner	0.0	0.3	1.0	0.0	1.4	0.0	

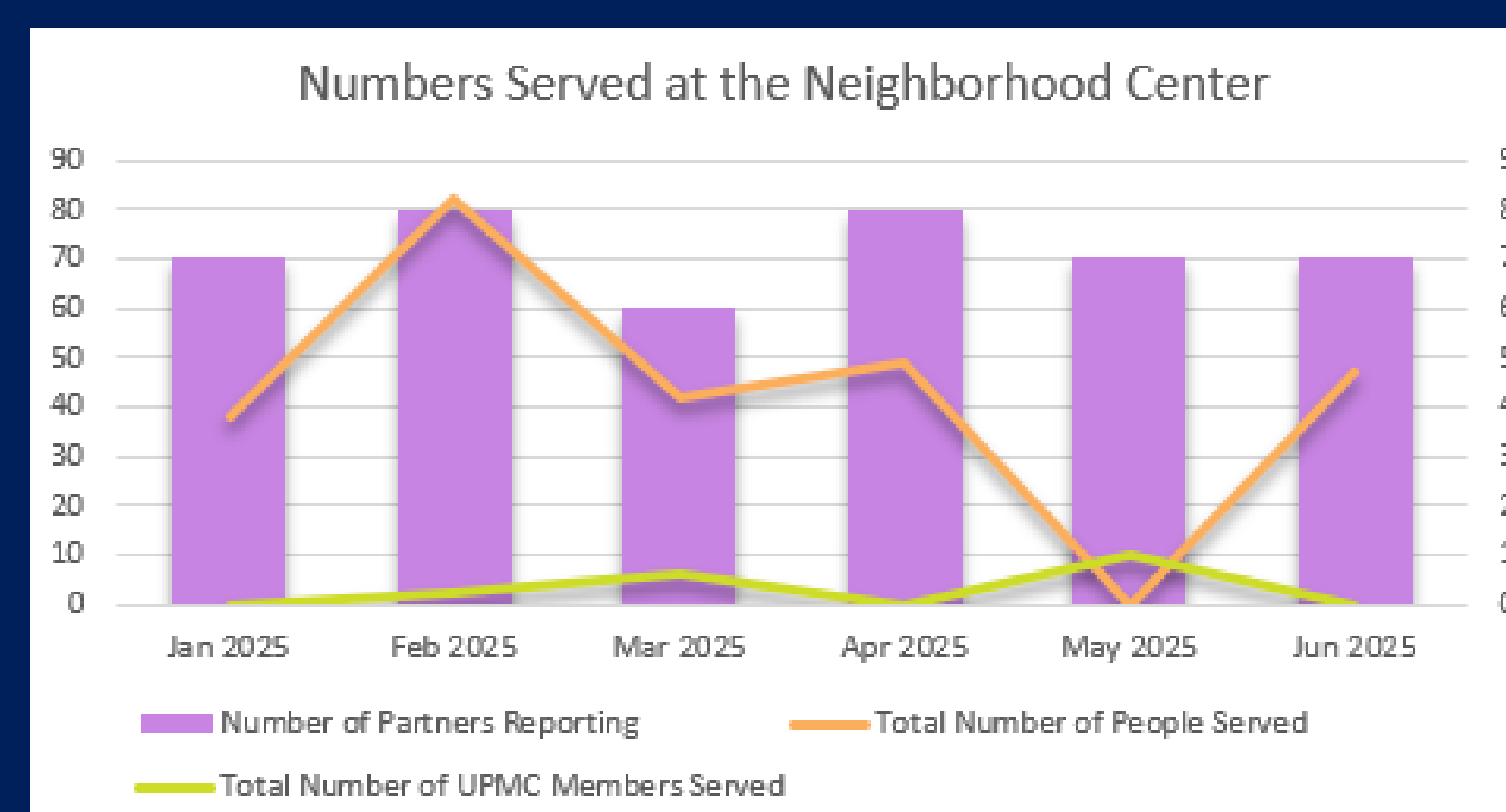


Fig. 1. Analysis of Partner Reporting and Average Client Engagement at the Neighborhood Center

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Facilitate Inter-Program Data and Information Sharing:** Implement secure systems and protocols to allow for seamless sharing of relevant, de-identified data and information between partner organizations within the center.
- **Host Regular Partner Networking Events:** Organize frequent "meet and greets" or networking opportunities for all organizations and participants utilizing the center's space.
- **Expand Preventative and Holistic Health Screenings:**

"I think I'd love to see a lot more of that, just like being able to have even if it's like... blood pressure events or like, you know, a mobile mammogram unit..." (Interview 2)

- **Develop a "Holistic School" Curriculum:** Systematically develop and expand programming focused on "kids and their development" and other life skills, moving towards the vision of a "holistic school for families and individuals."
- **Optimize Physical Space for Diverse Programming:**

"if they're going to design a new space... I would not make it be one with 15 feet by ceilings. I would make it regular size space so that sound doesn't carry so much" (Interview 6).

PUBLIC HEALTH SIGNIFICANCE

- **Promoting Health Equity:** By bringing services directly into underserved communities and addressing barriers like childcare and transportation.
- **Enhancing Preventative Health:** The strategic focus on preventative services like immunizations and dental care is crucial for long-term population health.
- **Strengthening Community Health Infrastructure through Collaboration:** Through strong partnerships with local organizations, the Center broadens the types of health and social services offered, building a stronger and more complete community health system.

DISCUSSION

The success of the UPMC Health Plan Neighborhood Center lies in its fundamental shift from a traditional healthcare delivery model to a community-embedded, holistic support system. The center effectively addresses not only medical needs but also critical social determinants of health, such as housing, transportation, and workforce development, which are frequently cited as major community challenges. It should be noted that quantitative data is underreported for 2025 due to staffing changes at the Center, another key area of opportunity moving forward.

The "non-hospital-y" atmosphere and the provision of essential amenities like childcare are crucial in fostering a comfortable environment that encourages engagement, particularly among vulnerable populations. The iterative approach of listening to community needs, rather than imposing services, has been instrumental in the rapid growth of program participation.

CONCLUSION

The UPMC Health Plan Neighborhood Center is a highly effective, community-driven initiative that successfully expands access to healthcare and vital social services. Its success is rooted in its accessible, friendly environment, its commitment to listening to community needs, and its robust partnerships. The center serves as a beacon of help and resources, significantly impacting the health and well-being of diverse populations.

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