

Health Centers in the South Repaired with FEMA Funds

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Organizations provide primary health services and home visits, among other assistance

Guaynabo, PUERTO RICO — Juan Abreu is a patient of the Patillas Primary Health Services Center (CSPS, in Spanish). Abreu has a condition that prevents him from walking and the Center offers him medical services through its home visit program.

Mildred Morel Ortiz, executive director of the CSPS, said that the patient and family support the services of the institution, which includes a health education program that they broadcast on the radio.

“He is the first to call, where he communicates that he likes the program and how happy he is with the center, his doctor and nurse.” “Our wish is that God grants him years of life. He cannot move, but he can communicate his feelings and opinions,” said Morel Ortiz.

CSPS is one of several healthcare facilities serving communities in the southern region that were recently repaired with nearly \$345,000 in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds to address damages caused by Hurricane María.

“Health is vital to all aspects of our society and it’s part of Puerto Rico’s comprehensive recovery plan. Being able to have health centers that adequately serve the population in repaired facilities and in optimal conditions is part of our mission at FEMA,” said Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator José G. Baquero.

The CSPS received nearly \$103,000 to repair its centers in Patillas and Maunabo. These centers offer outpatient services and primary medicine, pediatrics, psychology, vaccinations and pharmacy, among others. They also visit communities with a mobile unit.



For Morel Ortiz, “an infrastructure in good condition guarantees patients and employees better access to treatment areas, preventive and emergency medical services, in good working order and have comfortable and clean waiting spaces. This improves the patient’s experience, reduces stress and increases patient satisfaction,” she added.

The Patillas Center also houses the administrative offices and has 260 regular employees and 25 professional service employees. FEMA funds allowed the replacement of equipment such as an X-ray machine, acoustic ceiling panels and a security camera. Likewise, the windows shutters were removed and reinstalled and the roof was waterproofed.

On the other hand, at the Maunabo Clinic, repairs were carried out for the windows and the roof. An allocation of \$15,000 were earmarked for risk mitigation measures that include waterproofing the roof, installing drains and voltage protectors for the X-ray machine.

Another entity that that received funds was the Dr. Julio Palmieri Ferri, Inc. Family Health Center. The agency allocated nearly \$242,000 for work at its centers located in Guayama and Arroyo. They offer services such as emergency room seven days a week, telemedicine, teleconsultation, dental care, obstetrics and prenatal care.

They also have a Women’s Clinic, the Ryan White Program for HIV/AIDS patients and the Healthy School program, a clinic located at the Natividad Rodríguez González de Arroyo High School that offers general medicine, health education, psychology and nutrition services.

Some of the repairs in the Guayama center included the replacement of several light fixtures and a roof treatment to prevent leaks. Meanwhile, at the Arroyo center, several illuminated signs, security cameras, backup batteries, power distribution units, air conditioners, an X-ray film reader and an electrical transformer, among others, were replaced.

For his part, the executive director of the Central Office for Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3), Manuel A. Laboy Rivera, said that “each of these projects that were developed addressed the damages caused by Hurricane María and implemented risk mitigation measures to provide resilience to



the infrastructure. Our COR3 team will continue to assist the municipalities, government agencies and non-profit organizations that oversee the reconstruction work associated with the health sector for the benefit of our people.”

To date, FEMA has obligated nearly \$34.3 billion for over 11,000 recovery projects in Puerto Rico following Hurricane María.

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