

## Port Supports TCC's Breath Better Together Program

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People in Long Beach can breathe easier, thanks to \$920,000 from the Port of Long Beach.

**The Children's Clinic, Serving Children & Their Families (TCC)** was recently awarded the port grant to further the work of TCC's Breath Better Together program. Through that program, medical professionals provide holistic home support for patients suffering from asthma or cardio-pulmonary conditions, in addition to providing other services such as screenings, early diagnosis, intervention, monitoring and education.

TCC is an independent nonprofit, licensed Federally Qualified Community Health Center with 11 sites, a mobile medical clinic and mobile oral health clinic for underserved and high-risk communities, with a special emphasis on children, families and senior citizens. It was founded in 1939.

Some TCC patients have health insurance, but the costs of care often are not fully covered by other providers; other patients may not have insurance at all.

Dr. Elisa Nicholas, CEO of TCC, said the **Breath Better Together** program is designed to take into account patients' social ecological framework and recognize social determinants of health. Basically that means doctors are using more than diagnosis and pills to treat people – medical experts also consider factors such as how a person's home environment may contribute to health issues or whether or not a person really understands and regularly takes the medications prescribed to them.

"We started asthma work in the late '90s ... and we found that many times people didn't understand or take medication or have access to medication they needed," Nicholas said. "Or, we found that we were doing everything we were supposed to do, but people were still getting sick because we couldn't see from the hospital that a person's home was filled with mold."

Home visits, educational programs for patients and specialized training for physicians are all part of the Breath Better Together program, in addition to more traditional treatment.

"We want to keep people from missing as many school days and work as possible," Nicholas said, noting too that getting regular care and specialized care can help reduce emergency room visits.

Without support from the Port of Long Beach, TCC would still be able to provide more traditional care, but Nicholas said this latest grant – and the long relationship with the port – has really allowed TCC to provide more specialized care for families in the Long Beach community.

Since 2009, the Port of Long Beach Harbor Commission has committed about \$20.7 million to support community-based environmental mitigation. Long Beach's port is investing \$65 million in such efforts, more than any other U.S. seaport has voluntarily committed.

"The port has long been supporting our asthma work, and they appreciate what we do," Nicholas said. "These special programs, these extra things, are what makes our care so effective. Without the port funding, it would be very hard for us to do these types of programs."

She noted that lung and heart issues are among the more common conditions her patients face. More than 15% of TCC's 40,000 patients are diagnosed with asthma and/or cardiopulmonary diseases.