

Petaluma Health Care District Welcomes Benjamin Spierings and Expands Community Health Outreach Program

PETALUMA, Calif., Nov. 3, 2021 — The [Petaluma Health Care District](#) (PHCD) has hired Benjamin Spierings as Community Health Program Manager. Spierings will coordinate PHCD's community health initiatives and partnerships, as well as expand community outreach efforts. He will also oversee PHCD's newly developed Community Health Workers (CHW) program, which will train and equip a team that provides tailored strategy to improve residents' health and well-being.

“Ben is an excellent addition to our team and has real interest and experience in engaging the community to address social determinants that impact health outcomes,” said Ramona Faith, PHCD CEO, “and we are thrilled to be able to launch our much-needed Community Health Worker program. The introduction of this program in southern Sonoma County is a critical response to the many forms of environmental, equity and pandemic-related trauma our community has weathered. Our intent is to form an effective team that can address the root causes of poor health, particularly in underserved populations, while also providing a rich opportunity for education and personal growth. Ben's breadth of experience in community health strategy, public health education and multicultural competencies, as well as his familiarity with Sonoma County, make him a wonderful addition to our team.”

Born and raised in Santa Rosa, Spierings was previously contracted by Providence Health Community Benefit where he worked to convene Sonoma County Health Action chapters and community partners to address social determinants of health and to strengthen community health efforts. He also worked as a Community Health Educator while serving in Peace Corps Ethiopia, an experience that provided him with intensive training in broad-spectrum public health education, community outreach strategy and culturally sensitive practices. Spierings is a graduate of the University of California, Davis where he received a bachelor's degree in Global Disease Biology.

Under Spiering's oversight, the PHCD Community Health Worker program is currently recruiting community health workers and will provide them with the technical knowledge and the analytical and soft skills needed to be effective community health advocates and educators. By connecting services to the southern Sonoma County communities in greatest need, delivering relevant health and wellness information through trusted messengers, and working in partnership with community members to identify and address underlying barriers to care-seeking and access, PHCD is working to help build community resilience and move toward greater health equity. It is collaborating in these efforts with the CHW coalition in Sonoma County and other community partners, such as the Petaluma Health Center, Petaluma Valley Hospital, Petaluma Peoples Services Center and the Northern California Center for Wellbeing.

Community health workers will provide door-to-door or community-based outreach to residents to assist with COVID vaccination, complete health screenings or

assessments, offer education, conduct interviews, connect residents to resources, and follow up on these efforts. They will also educate residents about how to navigate the health and social service system while respecting cultural norms, disseminate information about public health services and build health literacy.

In addition to jobsite training, community health workers will also be given hybrid in-person-and-online education through the City College of San Francisco, including support for service delivery in Spanish. The program will provide training for conditions related to COVID-19, diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and mental health disorders.

About Petaluma Health Care District

PHCD is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of the southern Sonoma County community through leadership, advocacy, support, partnerships and education. Its vision is to foster a healthier community and equitable access to comprehensive health and wellness services. PHCD, a public agency managed by the community for the community, has served southern Sonoma County's health and wellness needs for more than 70 years. For more information, please visit www.phcd.org.

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