Palau Ministry Of Health

The Palau Ministry of Health and Human Services (MHHS) has provided direct family planning services since the early 1970s. The Family Planning (FP) Program is positioned under the broader Family Health Unit within the Division of Primary & Preventive Health Services. Its Title X grant provides funding to one hospital and eight federally qualified health centers (FQHCs).¹

Stats at a Glance²

- Number of family planning (FP) encounters –
 1,313
- FP users with incomes below 100% Federal Poverty Level (FPL) 690 (92%); all FP users with incomes below 250% of FPL 737 (98%)
- Number of tests performed for gonorrhea 48, syphilis 49, and HIV 0
- Number of female users who received a chlamydia test 49 or a Pap test 28



Pop. per sq. mi.

Less than 25 25 - 49 50 or more

Overview of Services Offered

As a Title X recipient, the MHHS provides a broad range of FP services including pregnancy prevention and birth spacing, pregnancy testing and counseling, assistance to achieve pregnancy, basic infertility services, sexually transmitted infection (STI) services, and other preconception health services. The services are voluntary, confidential, and provided regardless of ability to pay.³ The infographic below is an Overview of Services Offered within the MHHS's network. The data shown below are not specific to any particular site but rather are representative of the broader grantee network. For information on services available at individual service sites, please refer to the OPA clinic locator.



Pregnancy assistance and counseling

- Counseling on achieving pregnancy
- achieving pregnancyPreconception health services
- Pregnancy testing and counseling
- Basic infertility services



Contraceptive services

- FDA approved longacting contraceptives
- FDA approved shortacting contraceptives
- Natural family planning methods



STI services

- STI and HIV education and counseling
- STI and HIV screening and testing
- STI and HIV treatment
- STI self-testing
- Expedited partner therapy
- PrEP counseling and risk assessment
- PrEP prescription services
- PEP counseling
- O PEP prescription services



Other preventative health services

- Screening for breast cancer
- Screening for cervical cancer
- HPV vaccinations
- Screening for intimate partner violence
- Screening for mental health
- Screening for obesity
- Screening for smoking, drug, and alcohol use
- Adolescent-friendly health services

LEGEND

- Available at all service sites
- Available at service sites and through referrals
- Available through referral only or not available
- ¹ Source: Data collected by Mathematica in 2023 for the Title X Implementation Study.
- ² Source: Family Planning Annual Report (FPAR): 2022 National Summary.
- ³ See the <u>Title X Service Grants web page</u> for more information on the requirements and regulations guiding Title X projects.

Equity in Practice



MHHS's FP Program has dedicated its efforts to improving access to services for adolescents and men. In partnership with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, and other local partners, its adolescent health program provides preventive health care, reproductive health and family planning counseling, and other services to school-age youth. One noteworthy activity is the school screening initiative, which integrates reproductive health screening and education into other health and physical education activities at schools. Although some of these programs were limited in scope during the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts to give refresher trainings to providers and teachers are ongoing so this work can resume. Recognizing that adolescents may be more comfortable receiving sexual health information from a young person, the program is aiming to engage a youth facilitator for outreach and education sessions.

There have also been concerted efforts to actively engage men, including convening a male health clinic staffed with male health care workers, offering extended evening hours exclusively for men, and advertising the clinic as an opportunity for free health screening. This approach has been successful, resulting in high turnout at the male health clinic on the first Tuesday of every month.

Innovations in Practice



MHHS's FP Program partners with other public health programs to facilitate culturally responsive STI and HIV screening services. Given the stigma associated with sexuality and sexual and reproductive health services, the partners have found it beneficial to provide STI and HIV screening at core health resource centers that offer a broad range of free screening and education services—such as cancer screening, prenatal care, hypertension screening, and cholesterol control—instead of using dedicated STI and HIV screening sites for that purpose. Similarly, when doing outreach to communities in outlying areas, the program partners with teams providing screening and services related to immunizations, oral health care, chronic disease, tobacco use, and mental health. These events are promoted as opportunities for people to receive general health screening and education. This strategy of integrating culturally sensitive services with other health services in a comprehensive screening approach reduces stigma and promotes positive health-seeking behavior across all sectors.

Did You Know?



The population of Palau is small (approximately 17,000), and there is a sense that "everyone knows everyone" on the island. Along with this come issues related to confidentiality. The FP program manages to provide a broad range of FP and sexual and reproductive health services to the population with limited resources and trained staff. In some instances, the program uses civic action teams—U.S. military deployments supporting construction, medical care, and other projects on Palau—to provide sensitive health care services, as some Palauans feel more comfortable receiving care from a non-Palauan provider. The issues around confidentiality on the island also bolster the grantee's interest in building a strong telehealth practice, which would make it easier for providers and clients to discuss sensitive issues discretely.



Providers in Palau acknowledge a gap in using available FP data via regular feedback loops and other data tools. The grantee is interested in collaborating with other providers in Palau—working in different health care sectors that have been more successful in using data to drive program change—and with external technical partners to improve its use of quality indicators and performance measures, noting the crucial role these data can play in program change.



In addition to partnering with other programs within the Ministry of Health, the FP program has a long history of cultivating successful partnerships with other community groups, including the Community Advocacy Program (CAP), which carries out educational campaigns. The FP Information and Education Advisory Committee and CAP develop culturally appropriate educational materials. Together, CAP works with the FP program's Information & Education Committee and the Early Childhood & Comprehensive Systems to develop radio talk shows and outreach to schools.

About the Title X Program

The Title X Family Planning Program, created in 1970 and authorized under Title X of the Public Health Service Act, is administered by the Office of Population Affairs (OPA) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For more information, please refer to OPA's website.

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Web: <u>opa.hhs.gov</u> | Email: <u>opa@hhs.gov</u> | Twitter: <u>@HHSPopAffairs</u> YouTube: <u>HHSOfficeofPopulationAffairs</u> | LinkedIn: <u>HHS Office of Population Affairs</u>

