

Minutes

**Valleywise Community Health Centers Governing Council's
Connecting with the Community Committee
Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust Pavilion
2609 East Roosevelt Street, Phoenix, AZ 85008
2nd Floor, Auditorium 1
February 10, 2026, 3:00 p.m.**

Members Present: Chris Hooper, Chairman
Jason Vail Cruz, Vice Chairman
Rebecca Birr, Member
Piedad Blake, Member
Dr. Nelly Clotter-Woods, Member – *participated remotely*
Claudia Inabinet, Member
Jee Moon, Member
Dr. Michelle Barker, Ex-Officio Member

Members Absent: Earl Arbuckle, Member
Shelbi Bahena, Member
Scott Jacobson, Member
Helen Kennedy, Member
Irene Noriega, Member

Recorded by: Denise Tapia, Deputy Clerk of the Board

Call to Order:

Chairman Hooper called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m.

Roll Call

Ms. Tapia called roll. Following roll call, she noted that eight of the fourteen voting members of the Valleywise Community Health Centers Governing Council's Connecting with the Community Ad Hoc Committee members were present, which represented a quorum. Mr. Bikowski-Madera joined after roll call.

For the benefit of all participants, Ms. Tapia announced the Committee members who participated remotely.

Call to the Public

Chairman Hooper called for public comment. There were no comments.

General Session, Presentation, Discussion and Action:

1. Approval of Consent Agenda:
 - a. Minutes:
 - i. Approve Valleywise Community Health Centers Governing Council's Connecting with the Community Committee meeting minutes dated January 13, 2026

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General Session, Presentation, Discussion and Action, cont.:

1. Approval of Consent Agenda, cont.

MOTION: Ms. Birr moved to approve the consent agenda. Ms. Blake seconded.

VOTE: 8 Ayes: Chairman Hooper, Vice Chairman Vail Cruz, Ms. Birr, Ms. Blake, Ms. Inabinet, Dr. Clotter-Woods. Ms. Moon, Dr. Barker
0 Nays
6 Absent: Mr. Arbuckle, Ms. Bahena, Mr. Bikowski-Madera, Mr. Jacobson, Ms. Kennedy, Ms. Noriega
Motion passed.

2. Discuss, Review and Prioritize the Proposed Connecting with the Community Committee Outreach Projects for 2026

NOTE: Mr. Bikowski-Madera joined at 3:09 p.m.

Vice Chairman Vail Cruz reported that, during the most recent Connecting with the Community Committee meeting, the committee reviewed the successes achieved in calendar year 2025, which included each clinic completing at least one community event. The committee reached a consensus to continue the expectation in 2026, ensuring that all Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) participate in and complete at least one event during the year.

He noted discussions on opportunities to introduce a new outreach strategy aimed at strengthening community connections by inviting community members into the FQHCs for care, relationship-building, and other services. He asked the Connecting with the Community Committee (Committee) members to consider which opportunity would be the most effective for advancing the community connection goals for 2026.

Dr. Barker emphasized that the Committee was welcome to propose as many projects as they wished to pursue for the year. She clarified that the strategic action plan required only one initiative, so asking each FQHC to complete a single outreach activity or event fully satisfied that requirement. Her intention was to reassure the Committee that they should not feel pressured to add another project.

Ms. Inabinet summarized some of the upcoming events, noting that the Valleywise Comprehensive Health Center- Peoria had registered for five events hosted in different areas within Peoria. She stated that several major events were already aligned and suggested that if FQHC staff, Family Resource Center (FRC) staff, herself, and/or Valleywise Health eligibility staff supported these events, their participation could count as one of the clinics' required events.

Vice Chairman Vail Cruz stated that he and Ms. Inabinet had discussed how to ensure FQHC participation at community events. He emphasized the importance of having staff from each FQHC present so community members could recognize the individuals they would later see in the FQHC clinics. He also noted the value of leveraging trained speakers and future speakers to highlight why Valleywise Health was a strong place to receive care, with new facilities, expanded services, and improved infrastructure.

He said it was important for the community to understand Valleywise Health Uniform Data System (UDS) quality measures, exceeding those of many peer organizations. He stressed that Valleywise Health was no longer the old Maricopa County hospital, but rather a high-quality, customer-focused, integrated system offering comprehensive services.

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General Session, Presentation, Discussion and Action, cont.:

2. Discuss, Review and Prioritize the Proposed Connecting with the Community Committee Outreach Projects for 2026, cont.

Vice Chairman Vail Cruz referenced prior discussions about strengthening community partnerships. He suggested that, in addition to participating in events, clinics could adopt an ambassador model by engaging with neighborhood associations and other local groups to build relationships. He noted that this approach could also support efforts such as hiring fairs by inviting community members to learn about employment opportunities.

Ms. Moon explained that she had begun attending the community partnership meetings every month, which helped her stay aware of what was happening locally and identify opportunities for collaboration. By showing up consistently, her team became more visible, and partners started recognizing their presence and offering support for activities.

She noted that their own space was currently very limited due to ongoing renovation. Because of that, they were unable to host a talk support event for children, but through the relationships built in these meetings, Chicanos Por La Causa offered to host the event instead so their patients could still benefit. This experience showed how valuable the partnership had become, allowing them to continue offering support even when they could not host activities themselves.

Vice Chairman Vail Cruz emphasized that Ms. Moon's comments highlighted an important opportunity: the Guadalupe community had its own identity, traditions, and closed-community events, and strengthening the clinic's relationship meant showing up for that community in meaningful, non-extractive ways. He noted that participating in special events, whether by handing out water, sharing visuals of the future clinic, or inviting residents to an upcoming open house would help build trust and demonstrate reciprocity. Instead of appearing only when the clinic needs something.

He stressed the importance of offering support for community-led gatherings, even when they were not open to the public, so the FQHC were seen as a partner contributing value rather than simply providing services in exchange for payment.

Ms. Blake explained that the Valleywise Health pediatric clinics were unique in the Phoenix area, offering services and specialists that many other locations did not have. She saw this as a strong foundation for demonstrating that they were a true community-based, integrated health system. She added that when families brought their children in, it created an opportunity to show parents that they, too, could receive care.

She suggested outreach to local schools could strengthen this connection even further. By sharing brochures and information about the high-quality pediatric care Valleywise Health provided, the clinics could highlight what made their services distinctive and build trust with families who might not yet be familiar with Valleywise Health.

Dr. Barker pointed out that Valleywise Health had significant unused capacity in its pediatric dental services, an area that had not received much attention. She acknowledged that while pediatric dental care might be a central priority for some staff, it had not been a major emphasis on the broader FQHCs overall. Because of that gap, she saw pediatric dental outreach and engagement as a strong opportunity for growth and a way to better serve the community.

Vice Chairman Vail Cruz added that Valleywise Health pediatric services could serve as an entry point for engaging families, but the message should go further. He emphasized that the organization was a true one-stop shop for people of all ages, something many medical offices could not offer. By highlighting both high-quality pediatric care and the full spectrum of family services, he saw an opportunity to strengthen trust and show families that the clinic could meet their needs across generations.

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General Session, Presentation, Discussion and Action, cont.:

2. Discuss, Review and Prioritize the Proposed Connecting with the Community Committee Outreach Projects for 2026, cont.

Chairman Hooper emphasized that each clinic had its own distinct identity and set of needs, and that the individuality should be honored while still reinforcing the broader Valleywise Health identity. He described this as an inner circle of integration: making sure every clinic felt connected to the system while still maintaining what makes them unique. At the same time, he highlighted the importance of strengthening the outer circle by deepening relationships with community partners. He felt that focusing on both circles, internal cohesion and external partnership would be strong.

Vice Chairman Vail Cruz asked whether expanding relationship-building efforts would be realistic, specifically questioning if sending staff into the community and increasing participation in events could be managed without disrupting clinic operations.

Ms. Inabinet stated that she was not an FQHC manager or staff member, but mentioned the partnerships and relationships were already in place. What was needed was to be more proactive in fostering partnerships and to continue strengthening and growing those relationships.

Dr. Barker noted that each FQHC was expected to engage with at least one community-based organization, and that accomplishing even two activities in a year was realistic. She explained that while some staff were able to attend monthly meetings, other staff members may only manage a single activity and that still represented meaningful progress compared to 2025.

She reflected that some FQHC's had been highly active over the past year while others had struggled, and as the year ended, it became clear which clinics needed additional support. She emphasized that reaching out to those FQHC's and ensuring they had the necessary resources was essential, and that accountability looked different given the many competing demands within the FQHC settings.

Chairman Hooper asked whether there had been a standardized approach for how clinics engaged with community partners, or if each clinic had been handling those relationships differently.

Vice Chairman Vail Cruz explained that both approaches had been used. FQHC leadership had been informed about available opportunities, and when specific resources or reasons existed to deepen engagement such as serving a key demographic or special population staff extended themselves to be more present, especially when specific grants required the clinic to maintain a stronger community presence.

3. Discussion and Possible Action on Proposed Connecting with the Community Committee Outreach Projects for 2026

Vice Chairman Vail Cruz mentioned based on the discussion, the potential motion could be to continue holding one event for each clinic by the end of the calendar year. He noted that each clinic should work strategically to strengthen at least one community partnership in the next calendar year, selecting a partnership that aligned with its specific needs.

Dr. Barker expressed support for the proposed goal, noting that it was attainable, not overly burdensome for any clinic, and allowed flexibility to account for seasonal variations in workload. She suggested that, moving forward, the committee might consider inviting a clinic manager, either quarterly or monthly, to share a story about their community partnership or describe how they developed it, which could also be incorporated into managers' meetings.

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General Session, Presentation, Discussion and Action, cont.:

3. Discussion and Possible Action on Proposed Connecting with the Community Committee Outreach Projects for 2026, cont.

MOTION: Vice Chair Vail Cruz moved to approve the proposed Connecting with the Community Committee outreach goals for 2026, that each clinic hold one community event by the end of the 2026 calendar year; and that each clinic establishes and strengthens at least one community partnership by the end of 2026. Ms. Moon seconded.

VOTE: 9 Ayes: Chairman Hooper, Vice Chairman Vail Cruz, Ms. Birr, Mr. Bikowski-Madera, Ms. Blake, Dr. Clotter-Woods, Ms. Inabinet, Ms. Moon, Dr. Barker
0 Nays
5 Absent: Mr. Arbuckle, Ms. Bahena, Mr. Jacobson, Ms. Kennedy, Ms. Noriega
Motion passed.

Adjourn

MOTION: Mr. Birr moved to adjourn February 10, 2026, Valleywise Community Health Centers Governing Council's Connecting with the Community Committee Meeting. Ms. Inabinet seconded.

VOTE: 9 Ayes: Chairman Hooper, Vice Chairman Vail Cruz, Ms. Birr, Mr. Bikowski-Madera, Ms. Blake, Dr. Clotter-Woods, Ms. Inabinet, Ms. Moon, Dr. Barker
0 Nays
5 Absent: Mr. Arbuckle, Ms. Bahena, Mr. Jacobson, Ms. Kennedy, Ms. Noriega
Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 3:41 p.m.

Denise Tapia
Deputy Clerk of the Board