

Farmworker Advisory Commission Coastside Clinic Listening Session

February 12, 2025

Feedback Summary

On February 12, 2025, the San Mateo County Farmworker Advisory Commission (FAC) hosted a listening session at the Half Moon Bay Library regarding the Coastside Clinic. The purpose of the listening session was to collect feedback from farmworkers and other community members on their experiences with the Clinic to help improve Clinic services.

Listening Session Overview

The listening session was held in response to concerns that FAC members have heard from community members regarding the Coastside Clinic. The meeting was planned by FAC members Judith Guerrero and Corina Rodriguez, with assistance from the San Mateo County Office of Community Affairs (OCA). The meeting was facilitated by Debbie Schechter of Schechter Consulting along with staff from OCA, the City of Half Moon Bay, Puente, and Coastside Hope. Portions of the meeting were in English and portions were in Spanish, with simultaneous interpretation provided for both languages. Outreach for the meeting was conducted by FAC members, community organizations and County staff via flyers, social media, email and word of mouth. Twenty-four community members (not including FAC members) attended the meeting.

At the start of the meeting, Judith and Corina explained that the purpose is to provide feedback to the County about how the Coastside Clinic (including the mobile clinic in Pescadero) is doing in serving residents and what can be improved. The following County staff were present and introduced themselves:

- Jack Nassar, Deputy Director, Ambulatory Services, San Mateo Medical Center
- Jeanette Aviles, Medical Director, Primary Care Services, San Mateo Medical Center
- Jocelyn Vidales, Planning and Implementation Coordinator, San Mateo County Healthcare for the Homeless/Farmworker Health
- Marisol Escalera, Policy Director/Legislative Policy Aide to Supervisor Ray Mueller

Community members shared their experiences and feedback regarding the Coastside Clinic in breakout groups of four to nine people each. Breakout groups were led by a facilitator and feedback was captured by a notetaker. Three breakout groups were conducted in Spanish and one was conducted in English. FAC members participated in the breakout groups as listeners only. Participants provided responses to the following questions:

1. How often have you and your family used the clinic in the past year and for what purpose? (If you have not used the clinic, what is preventing you from using it?)
2. What do you like about the clinic and what is working well?
3. What concerns do you have about the clinic?
4. How could the clinic better address your and your family's health needs?

Community Feedback Received Regarding the Coastside Clinic

A summary of the input received at the meeting is provided below.

1. Use of the Coastside Clinic

Community members reported **using the Coastside Clinic for a wide range of services** including wellness exams and regular checkups, dentist, bloodwork and other lab tests and results, medication refills, diabetes, cancer screening, foot care and ovarian exams. Some participants reported that they have not been going to the Clinic for several years. Reasons for not using the Clinic included long wait times for appointments, long wait time to get assistance on the phone, appointment cancellations and cancellations of the mobile clinic in Pescadero, and insurance issues.

2. What is Working Well with the Coastside Clinic

Several participants shared **positive experiences with doctors and dentists at the clinic** including their primary care doctor, the dentist and the ear doctor. They noted that these doctors communicate well, provide good follow-up and ask questions to get more information about clients' health status.

Some participants **appreciated that the Clinic is close by and noted that the mobile clinic in Pescadero is important** because many patients don't have transportation to Half Moon Bay or San Mateo. Others said that they feel safe and secure at the clinic. One participant shared that the MyChart app works well for reviewing appointment results and test results. Some participants reported that they had no positive experience with the Clinic to share and stated that everything needs to improve.

While it was not a focus of the meeting, a few participants expressed appreciation for the Street and Field medicine team. Community members explained that the nurses come to workplaces to give vaccinations, do bloodwork, provide medication and sometimes food. They connect patients to locations for further care.

3. Concerns about the Coastside Clinic

Participants spent most of the time in the breakout groups sharing concerns about the Coastside Clinic and ideas for improvement. Concerns primarily related to **challenges in getting appointments, appointment cancellations, lack of follow-up regarding test results and referrals, and complaints regarding communication with and treatment by Clinic staff.**

Long wait times on the phone, to get appointments and at the Clinic: Many participants shared that, when calling the clinic for an appointment or to change an appointment, they are put on hold for long periods of time (up to 30 minutes). Some reported that even the Puente direct phone line has about 10 minutes of hold time and no option to leave a message. Some participants come to the Clinic in person to schedule an appointment because it takes too long on the phone. Vision care appointments are challenging because the vision care person comes only once a week. When appointments do get

"When the clinic does make it to Pescadero it's good because we don't have services over there but when it doesn't make it, it's just as impactful."

– Participant

scheduled, they are often well into the future, e.g., two to three months out. Once at the clinic, scheduled appointments are often late. Participants mentioned having to wait up to five hours and missing a half or full day of work due to delays in seeing the doctor and completing tests. The challenge of getting appointments is a problem for children needing vaccines and for people worrying about health issues. Community members reported that wait times can also be long to get medication refills.

Appointment cancellations and inconsistency of mobile clinic: Community members shared that the mobile clinic gets cancelled at the last minute without notification. Appointments at the Coastside Clinic can also get cancelled at the last minute or if patients are only five minutes late. It can take two to three months to get a new appointment.

Lack of follow-up for test results and referrals: Several community members reported that they often don't receive follow-up from Clinic staff regarding test results despite multiple requests or that results take two months or more to be shared with patients. One participant said that they never received results from a cancer screening. Without these results, community members can't know if they are sick or well. Participants reported that doctors sometimes forget to make follow-up appointments and referrals to other doctors or specialists.

"We are their patient--we expect lab results to be given."
– Participant

Poor communication, particularly with Spanish-speaking patients, and poor treatment: Community members reported that Clinic staff get upset when patients don't understand English or if an interpreter is needed. They said that there are not enough Spanish-speaking staff at the Clinic, interpretation is not always offered to patients and the interpretation machine at the clinic does not work. Patients have been told that health concerns are "due to your age" or that "there is nothing else that I [doctor] can do."

4. Ways the Clinic Could Better Serve the Community

Key ways in which the clinic could better serve community members' health needs include **expanding availability and capacity to serve residents, having providers who are open and communicative with patients, improving follow-up for tests and referrals, and addressing insurance issues.**

Improving availability and increasing capacity to serve residents: Participants wanted to see expanded hours for both the Coastside Clinic and the mobile clinic to see patients after work and after school. Some suggested an urgent care facility, emergency appointments for emergency issues, and a permanent clinic in Pescadero or at least improved consistency and more days for the mobile clinic. Community members wanted to see more doctors and dentists, more staff to answer the phone, reduced wait times for appointments, and reduced wait times to see the doctor and get tests. Providing more service to rural communities was also mentioned.

"We are a community that is isolated from resources."
– Participant

Better providers and improved communication and openness with patients:

Community members wanted more experienced doctors and staff who provide better and more courteous service. They wanted doctors to listen more to their patients and to be honest with them at all times. They wanted better communication about costs such as the out-of-pocket costs of medications. Participants also wanted to have more Spanish-speaking staff and more interpretation resources at the Clinic.

“Monitors as interpreters are not good and I can't express my true feelings”
– Participant

Better follow-up for tests and referrals: Community members wanted doctors and other Clinic staff to follow-up with them more consistently and more quickly regarding test results and necessary referrals to other doctors/specialists.

Insurance issues: Participants wanted doctors and other staff to assist with prior authorization for insurance and help to get medications and tests covered by insurance. Some community members expressed that the Clinic should be accessible to all residents regardless of their insurance or lack of insurance.

Next Steps

At the end of the listening session, Judith Guerrero explained that the facilitator would compile the feedback received at the meeting into a summary report that would be presented at the next Farmworker Advisory Commission meeting on March 12 in Pescadero. The FAC will review and discuss the feedback and identify possible recommendations regarding the Clinic to present to the Board of Supervisors.