



**COUNTY OF SAN MATEO**  
**BOARDS AND COMMISSION**  
FARMWORKER ADVISORY COMMISSION

**Executive Summary and Recommendations**

**Background:**

The Coastside Clinic and its Pescadero Mobile Clinic have long served as essential health resources for the farmworker community on the south coast of San Mateo County. Over the past decade, the clinic received significant positive feedback; however, in recent years, increasing concerns have emerged regarding service delivery. Community members have raised issues such as long wait times, frequent appointment cancellations, limited access to Spanish-speaking staff, and poor communication, especially regarding test results and referrals. These concerns were voiced to local community organizations, including Puente de la Costa Sur, ALAS, and Coastside Hope, and have been shared with the Farmworker Advisory Commission (FAC), which was formed to address the needs of the farmworker community.

To address these concerns and create a space for open dialogue, the Farmworker Advisory Commission hosted a listening session on February 12, 2025. The session aimed to gather feedback on how the Coastside Clinic and its mobile clinic in Pescadero are serving residents and identify areas for improvement. The session, facilitated by Schechter Consulting, was attended by 24 community members, and supported by various community organizations and County staff.

**Key Areas of Feedback**

**1. Service Delivery**

- The Coastside Clinic provides a range of services, including wellness exams, regular checkups, dental services, lab tests, diabetes and cancer screenings, and medication refills.
- Many community members reported they have not visited the clinic recently due to long wait times for appointments, frequent cancellations, limited phone accessibility, and issues with prior authorizations. As a result, some have chosen to seek care elsewhere, traveling longer distances or paying out-of-pocket.

**2. Positive Experiences**

- Positive experiences were shared about the clinic's doctors and dentists, particularly regarding communication and follow-up.
- The clinic's proximity was noted as beneficial, especially for those without transportation.

**3. Concerns and Challenges**

- **Wait Times:** Community members expressed frustration with long phone hold times, delays in scheduling appointments (sometimes up to three months), and extended wait times at the clinic (up to five hours).
- **Appointment Cancellations:** Last-minute cancellations of appointments, often with no prior notice or explanation, were highlighted as a significant issue.
- **Lack of Follow-Up:** Many community members reported poor follow-up on test results and referrals, sometimes waiting months without receiving results at all.
- **Communication Issues:** The lack of Spanish-speaking staff and unreliable interpretation services were frequently cited as barriers to effective communication with Spanish-speaking patients.

- **Treatment and Staff Issues:** Some community members cited dismissive treatment by clinic staff, particularly regarding health concerns related to age or other factors.
- **State Disability Insurance Forms:** Inconsistent follow-through in completing State Disability Insurance (SDI) forms has been identified as a barrier that may prevent clients from accessing critical income support while on disability
- 4. **Suggestions for Improvement**
  - **Expanded Hours and Capacity:** Community members recommended extending clinic hours and increasing mobile clinic availability, particularly in rural areas. When planning extended office hours, community input should be sought to ensure effectiveness.
  - **Improved Communication and Patient-Centered Care:** Enhanced communication, especially in Spanish, and the hiring of culturally competent staff were emphasized as key improvements. Community members also requested better responsiveness and more patient-centered care.
  - **Improved Follow-Up:** There was a strong emphasis on the need for timely follow-up on test results, referrals, and ongoing care.
  - **Prior Authorization Support:** Assistance with prior authorizations was requested to ensure medications are accessible and timely for all patients.

Based on the valuable insights gathered during the listening session, the following recommendations have been developed to address the long-standing concerns and improve the services provided by the Coastsides Clinic and its Pescadero Mobile Clinic. These recommendations include actionable steps, clear timelines, and assigned responsibilities to ensure accountability and effective progress.

## Recommendations

1. **Finalize Summary of Key Community Concerns**
  - **Action:** Finalize the summary report, incorporating feedback from the listening session and FAC members, and outline specific recommendations.
  - **Timeline:** Within 6 weeks (by May 2025) – FAC: J. Guerrero and C. Rodriguez.
2. **Present Findings to District 3 Supervisor**
  - **Action:** Submit the final report and feedback gathered from the listening session to the District 3 Supervisor, Health Plan of San Mateo Commission, Healthcare for the Homeless Farmworker Health, and the San Mateo Medical Center board.
  - **Timeline:** Within 6 weeks (by May 2025) – FAC: J. Guerrero and C. Rodriguez.
3. **Request Action from District 3 Supervisor's Office**
  - **Action:** Request a response from the District 3 Supervisor's office outlining the next steps and a timeline for an improvement plan.
  - **Timeline:** Within 2 months (by July 2025) – FAC: J. Guerrero and C. Rodriguez.
4. **Plan for a Follow-Up Listening Session**
  - **Action:** Plan a follow-up listening session one year from now to assess progress and evaluate improvements.
  - **Timeline:** Plan the session by April 2026, with the session taking place by May 2026 – FAC.
5. **Improvements for the Clinic**
  - **Action 1: Increasing Capacity:**
    - Expand office hours for both Coastsides Clinic and mobile clinic to better meet community needs (e.g., after work and school hours).

- When improving and expanding office hours, patients should be part of the process and provide input on the suggested hours to increase the efficiency of the improvement.
- Increase mobile clinic availability by adding one additional day at Pescadero.
- **Timeline:** Within 6 months (by November 2025).
- **Action 2: Improve Communication and Cultural Competency:**
  - Hire more Spanish-speaking staff and ensure cultural competency training for all staff, with a focus on patient-centered care and communication.
  - Improved communication, especially for Spanish-speaking patients, and more responsive, patient-centered care.
  - Provide annual training in culturally competency, customer service with an emphasis patient-centered skills training.
  - Provide annual training on How to Access Interpreter devices to improve communication with non-English speaking community.
  - Ensuring the hiring of culturally competent staff will be vital to improve communication and patient centered care.
  - Develop a process for receiving feedback from patients to ensure patients receive quality healthcare and treated with dignity and respect.
  - **Timeline:** Within 3-6 months (by November 2025).
- **Action 3: Address Lack of Follow-Up:**
  - Implement a system for ensuring follow-up on test results, referrals, and ongoing care within 30 days or less.
  - **Timeline:** Within 3-6 months (by November 2025).
- **Action 4: Address Delay in Treatment and Medication:**
  - Complete pre-authorizations for medications and services within 5-10 business days to ensure timely access to care.
  - **Timeline:** Within 6 months (by November 2025).
- **Action 5: Prevent Appointment Cancellations and Mobile Clinic Inconsistencies:**
  - Ensure a backup system for physician coverage at the Pescadero mobile clinic to prevent last-minute cancellations and vacations.
  - **Timeline:** Within 3 months (by August 2025).
- **Action 6: Address Phone Line Issues:**
  - Ensure adequate staffing for phone lines and monitor call volumes to reduce wait times, aiming for hold times of no longer than 30 minutes.
  - **Timeline:** Within 3 months (by August 2025).
- **Action 7: Address Longstanding Community Concerns:**
  - Develop a formal improvement plan based on feedback from the listening session and report back to the Farmworker Advisory Commission for transparency and stakeholder input.
  - **Timeline:** Within 3 months (by August 2025).

## Conclusion

By implementing these recommendations, the Farmworker Advisory Commission is committed to improving the healthcare experience for the farmworker community. Through continued engagement, transparency, and accountability, the Coastside Clinic and Pescadero Mobile Clinic can better meet the needs of those they serve, fostering a more accessible and responsive healthcare system for all.

# **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 prior authorization issues. Many have chosen to travel longer distances or pay out-of-pocket rather than waiting for an appointment at the Coastside Clinic

### 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.

"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

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 Street and Field medicine team nurses come to workplaces to give vaccinations, do bloodwork, provide medication and sometimes food. They connect patients to locations for further care. Some participants also shared appreciation for the new urgent care location in Half Moon Bay.

### 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 90 minutes). Some reported asking Puente for assistance with an appointment

and 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 scheduled, they are often well into the future, e.g., two to three months out. Once at the clinic, scheduled appointments are often behind schedule. Participants mentioned having to wait up several 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 issues with prior authorization.**

**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. 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 timely regarding test results and necessary referrals to other doctors/specialists.

**Prior authorization issues:** Obtaining prior authorizations for medical services or medications is the responsibility of the healthcare provider (doctor's office). Participants asked for the clinic to do these authorizations in order for them to get medications and medical services covered by insurance. Participants with full-scope MediCal are not responsible for paying copays for medications. If a prior authorization is denied, a covered equivalent medication can be prescribed. This responsibility falls on the healthcare provider, not the patient. Despite the clinic being aware of this, many farmworker participants at the listening session expressed ongoing concerns about this issue. 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.