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## HealthCare Access Maryland wants to parlay \$200K grant into hospital partnerships



*Jaclyn Borowski*

HealthCare Access Maryland CEO Kathleen Westcoat hopes a \$200,000 grant will be a pathway to partnerships with hospitals

**Reporter - Sarah Gantz**  
*Baltimore Business Journal*

HealthCare Access Maryland is hoping to leverage a grant with [Sinai Hospital of Baltimore](#) into a long-term contract with the hospital and possibly others in the area.

The Baltimore nonprofit will spend a [\\$200,000 grant](#) from the

Maryland Community Health Resources Commission on a program with Sinai Hospital of Baltimore that targets people who frequent the emergency room for help with chronic health conditions.

If the program is successful, Sinai could maintain a contract with HCAM beyond the grant and HCAM could look to spread the program to other hospitals.

“I really think our future, or at least part of our future, at HCAM will rely on new and different partnerships — those being at hospitals and other places we haven’t worked before,” said HCAM CEO [Kathleen Westcoat](#).

Westcoat expects the program to serve about 2,700 people a year and hopes to launch it in April.

HCAM will hire four social workers who will be based in Sinai’s emergency department to intercept its most frequent visitors. The HCAM staff will help connect them with community-based resources, like a primary care doctor, who can help them better manage their condition on a daily basis.

The program also will help patients get health insurance, if they don’t have it and want it, better understand how to use the insurance they have and help them connect with local doctors and clinics.

“These are vulnerable people who could possibly end up in some of our other programs. This way we may be able to catch them,” Westcoat said.

Keeping this type of patient out of the hospital will be increasingly important for hospitals in Maryland. Under the state’s new hospital payment system, hospitals will be under tight budgets, which means they need to reduce admissions among people whose conditions could be treated for less cost at a doctor’s office or clinic.

About 5 percent of emergency department patients account for about 20 percent of the department’s visits at Sinai.

"That's an indication that by understanding who these folks are and linking them with more appropriate care, we can get them the help they really need," said David Baker, Sinai's director of clinical innovation. "We can be sure the folks who do need the emergency department get care and keep folks who have been admitted to the hospital from coming back, keep them healthier."

The HCAM partnership will be beneficial for Sinai. The hospital would otherwise need to find a way to address the problem with its own resources or seek out a different deal with another community group.