

# MIDWEST CLINICIANS' NETWORK NETWORK NEWS

## Building a Better Future: Continuous Improvement Through Lean Six Sigma

Jeanie Blake, BSN,  
[Muskingum Valley Health Centers](#), Zanesville, Ohio



**In a challenging year of workforce shortages, organizational growth, and rising costs, our organization has embraced the Lean Six Sigma process to enhance efficiencies, streamline workflows, and improve outcomes. By systematically, comprehensively, and cooperatively reducing waste, we have achieved savings far greater than those possible through reductions in care and coverage.**

**Departmental Workflow Enhancements** We utilized the Lean Six Sigma methodology to enhance the workflows within our department responsible for conducting all prior authorizations, referral processing and tracking, and transportation scheduling. The rising workload posed significant challenges for our staff, leading to increased referral processing times. Before deciding to add additional staff, we conducted a Lean Six Sigma analysis. The resulting data-driven insights prompted a reorganization of existing staff responsibilities, optimizing their roles and improving overall efficiency.

**Pediatric Dental Care Integration** Linking our pediatric patients to dental care within the first 18 months is a critical component of comprehensive primary care. Despite having dental services in-house, we lacked an established process for referrals. Utilizing the Lean Six Sigma process, we developed a seamless referral system, which effectively doubled the number of pediatric patients receiving dental referrals. This integration ensures that our young patients receive timely dental care, contributing to better overall health outcomes.

**Population Health Platform Implementation** To enhance our performance in the value-based care arena, our organization invested in a population health platform. Care Managers are key to this initiative, but we were not progressing as quickly as expected in integrating the population health tool into their daily workflows. The Lean Six Sigma process played a pivotal role in this transformation, identifying opportunities for efficiency and facilitating significant progress in the use of Azara. Through this methodology, we were able to streamline processes, reduce inefficiencies, and enhance care management practices.

**Continuous Improvement and Future Directions** The Lean Six Sigma process has become an integral part of our organizational culture, driving continuous improvement across various departments. Our commitment to applying Lean Six Sigma principles ensures that we remain agile and responsive to challenges, consistently delivering high-quality care while managing costs. As we move forward, we will continue to leverage Lean Six Sigma to address emerging issues, optimize operations, and maintain our focus on patient-centered care.

*Jeanie*  
MWCN President

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## Patient & Employee Surveys

Click this box to see patient & employee surveys available through MWCN. Customizable survey options for your employees, board members or stakeholders.



## CONTACT US

Midwest Clinicians' Network  
321 W. Lake Lansing Road  
East Lansing, MI 48823  
517.381.9441  
info@midwestclinicians.org  
www.midwestclinicians.org

Written by: *Chinwe Udemgba, Medical Student, Class of 2026*  
*University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine*

## Understanding the Issue

Severe maternal morbidity (SMM) occurs when people face life-threatening complications during pregnancy, labor, or the postpartum period. Rates of maternal morbidity and mortality continue to rise in the United States, with significant disparities in who is affected. Women from low-income communities, minoritized racial and ethnic groups, and those who have Medicaid or who are uninsured are disproportionately at risk. These groups are often affected by a combination of racial and economic segregation, and for those living in rural communities, long distances and poor transportation infrastructure may compound the challenges.

## Impact on Rural Communities

A 2019 study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture revealed that of the 10% of counties with the highest levels of poverty, the majority are in rural regions. Rural communities face many of the same healthcare challenges as urban low-income areas. However, the limited access to medical care is especially notable in rural communities, where accessing specialty health services can often mean a full-day commitment of travel, adding costs like gas and childcare to the already burdensome financial strain. The most accessible form of healthcare provided in rural communities is in primary care settings.

## Preventative Measures

Despite these challenges, SMM can be prevented with increased focus on preconception care. In a 2021 study of women with Medicaid, receiving preventive care in the year prior to pregnancy was associated with reduced risk of SMM. This included a broad range of services available in primary care, such as nutrition counseling, screening for sexually transmitted infections, and contraceptive care. Among women with diabetes, hypertension, or chronic kidney disease, those who received any preconception care had 16% lower odds of SMM in their subsequent pregnancy, controlling for demographic factors. These chronic conditions greatly increase the risk of pregnancy complications. Identifying and addressing them prior to pregnancy has the potential to reduce life-threatening or long-term complications and the need to travel long distances for specialized care that is often out of reach.

## Role of Primary Care Clinicians

Primary care clinicians are vital resources for rural communities. With improved preconception care, we can support all people, regardless of where they live, in having healthy pregnancies and long-term well-being.

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*“The Midwest Clinicians’ Network, Inc.’s (MWCN) fosters a collaborative learning environment for member organizations, empowering them to navigate the dynamic healthcare landscape and enhance health outcomes nationwide.”*

## How can primary care clinicians address this disparity?

### Open communication

Explain the importance of preventative care to patients of reproductive age

### Understanding the realities of daily life

If you advise patients to get a gym membership they can’t afford or eat foods that are not available at their local market, they may feel underserved and dismissed

### Providing Resources

Point patients to evidence-based resources to help optimize health before pregnancy.  
(<https://www.cdc.gov/pregnancy/about/index.html>).

# Behavioral Health Vital Signs: The Case for Measurement-Based Care

Written by: Stacey R. Gedeon, Psy.D., MSCP

## Consider these scenarios in patient care:

**Question to PCP:** “How do you know if Mr. Smith’s blood pressure is improving?”

**PCP’s answer:** “We check it at every visit and make adjustments as needed.”

**Question to BHP:** “How do you know if Mr. Smith’s depression is improving?”

**BHP’s answer:** “Well, he seems to be crying less in session.”

Unlike medical care, where regular measurements guide treatment decisions, behavioral health (BH) often lacks consistent use of **Measurement-Based Care (MBC)**. MBC involves *repeated measurement of symptoms over time*, providing valuable data to assess progress and adjust interventions.

## Why Use MBC?

Research shows MBC improves outcomes, enhances patient-clinician communication, and increases patient engagement. By providing real-time, “BH vitals,” it helps identify when treatment isn’t working and allows for timely adjustments. MBC also facilitates access to care by defining treatment endpoints, crucial in specialty mental health settings where capacity is limited. Finally, MBC fosters interdisciplinary communication and reduces clinician burnout.

## How to Implement MBC

Use reliable, user-friendly Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMS) like the PHQ-9 or GAD-7, and follow a “**Collect, Share, Act**” process:

- **Collect:** Explain MBC’s purpose, administer the tool(s), and collect the data routinely throughout treatment.
- **Share:** Discuss results and ask if they fit patients’ experience, review trends.
- **Act:** Collaborate on treatment planning using PROM results, the BHP’s clinical judgment and patients’ feedback to guide the course of care.

While concerns about “assessment fatigue,” time management constraints, and other potential barriers exist, MBC enhances – not replaces – clinical judgment and is most effective when integrated thoughtfully into care.

## Revisiting the Scenario

**Question to BHP:** “How do you know if Mr. Smith’s depression is improving?”

**BHP’s MBC Answer:** “His PHQ-9 scores show steady improvement, and he agrees his symptoms and functioning are improving.”

MBC can be utilized effectively in both integrated and specialty mental health settings. It transforms behavioral health care by providing actionable, measurable insights that benefit patients, clinicians, and organizations alike.

To learn more about MBC implementation, integrated workflow optimization, and additional presentation and training topics, contact Dr. Gedeon [here](#).

*Dr. Stacey R. Gedeon is a health psychologist with over 25 years of clinical and leadership experience within healthcare settings. She is the founder of SRG Healthcare Consulting & Professional Coaching, PLLC ([srghcc.com](http://srghcc.com)).*



**Empowering Healthcare Professionals and Organizations to Thrive**

## Transformational Solutions for Healthcare Providers and Teams:

- ❖ **Leadership Development:** Enhancing skills in emotional intelligence, communication, and team engagement.
- ❖ **Professional Coaching:** Empowering healthcare providers, leaders, and teams to rediscover purpose and prevent burnout.
- ❖ **Integrated Primary Care Expertise:** Designing, implementing and optimizing programs that improve workflows and patient outcomes.
- ❖ **Employee Retention Strategies:** Driving engagement through tailored solutions to build resilient, thriving teams.

*Dr. Stacey Gedeon has over 25 years of experience as a health psychologist and leader of successful healthcare teams. She specializes in guiding individuals, teams, and organizations to overcome challenges and achieve meaningful success.*



**Stacey R. Gedeon, Psy.D.**

**Contact Information**  
Website: [srghcc.com](http://srghcc.com)  
Email: [drgedeon@srghcc.com](mailto:drgedeon@srghcc.com)  
Phone: (734) 210-1231



# Health Center Tracking Systems: FTCA Compliance and Risk Mitigation

Written By: Kyle Vath

In today's complex healthcare environment, robust tracking systems are crucial for ensuring patient safety and maintaining continuity of care for health centers' most vulnerable patients. The potential consequences of health centers not maintaining an effective tracking program are poor patient outcomes, dissatisfied patients, ineffective communication, and potential medical malpractice lawsuits. Not only do tracking programs lower risk and improve care, but community health centers must implement comprehensive tracking systems for referrals, hospitalizations, and diagnostics to meet HRSA and Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) requirements. These requirements are outlined in HRSA's resource, "[FTCA Deeming Application Tracking Policies](#)". Let's explore the key components of each system.

## Tracking Systems Overview

The health center must maintain comprehensive tracking systems that follow referrals from origin to completion, including documenting the origin of referral, the status of the referral, and other administrative and clinical details of the referral.

A monitoring system for hospital and Emergency Department (ED) admissions must track patient information, admission/visit dates, notification dates, visit rationale, documentation received



or exchanged, documentation requested from the hospital with the associated dates, and follow-up initiatives with hospitals and patients. Procedures around hospitalization should apply to both health center-directed ED visits and independent patient ED visits.

Tracking systems should also include the tracking of all diagnostic orders including laboratory and imaging tests and must require systematic tracking of patient information, test ordering dates, ordering provider details, ordered tests list, results receipt date, provider review documentation, recommended follow-up actions, and patient communication records, including documentation of unsuccessful attempts.

HRSA often refers to these requirements as ensuring the tracking system is a "closed-loop process". This type of process allows health centers to ensure that the vulnerable patients the health centers serve do not "fall through the cracks" of our often complicated healthcare system.


[See the full article here](#)




Are you interested in a Mock FTCA Application review for this year's FTCA Application? RegLantern's team of health center FTCA compliance experts will review your FTCA application documentation prior to your team's submission to help you have the easiest application year yet! [Contact the RegLantern team](#) today to learn more!

## Join the MWCN Homelessness & Housing Networking Call!

 **Date:** January 21, 2025  **Time:** 12:00 PM EST

 **Event Overview:** The MWCN Homelessness & Housing Networking Call is a great opportunity to connect with other health centers who are focused interested in discussing strategies around homelessness and housing. This session is designed to foster collaboration, share resources, and discuss strategies to tackle housing issues effectively.

Whether you're a seasoned professional or new to the field, this call is a chance to expand your network, gain insights, and contribute to meaningful discussions.

 **How to Join:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYscu-srz4tHdwgVUyxn0765TmKUeZk6eDG>

Don't miss out on this important conversation! Mark your calendars and prepare to engage with a community dedicated to making a difference.

[Feel free to reach out if you have any questions.](#) We look forward to seeing you there!



# Aligning Your Health Center Board with the Patients Being Served

Written By: Jennifer Genua McDaniel on behalf of [Compliatric](#)

Community health centers play a key role in delivering accessible and high-quality care to communities they serve. Having a board that represents patients served is not only a requirement of HRSA (Health Center Program Compliance Manual-Chapter 20 Board Composition) but the essence of the health center movement. Maintaining a patient centered board of directors is directly linked to supporting the needs of patients in the service area. It also helps community health centers fulfill their mission and sustain meaningful community impact. As health centers continue to evaluate the requirement of having a patient centered board, the following considerations may be helpful.

## **Engaging in Community Outreach and Feedback.**

Regularly engaging with patients (not just those patient majority board members) helps the board of directors stay attuned to evolving needs and priorities. One method to evaluate patient feedback is the use of patient satisfaction surveys. While written feedback is helpful to determine needs, using focus groups and town hall meetings helps patients voice their concerns and needs in real time. There may be patients who have challenges with providing written feedback, and a focus group or town hall meeting would make it easier for them to express themselves. This type of qualitative data can elicit a more descriptive explanation on additional services to provide, specific feedback on hours of operations and areas of opportunities and challenges that patients may face when accessing services.

## **Ensuring Diversity Representation.**

The patient population of a community health center often spans various socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic groups. Ensuring diversity on the board fosters a more comprehensive understanding of the community's needs and reduces the risk of oversight or bias. Board of directors can develop a board matrix, which is a valuable tool that maps out the skills, demographics and experiences of current board members against the needs of the health center and helps to identify gaps. Regularly reviewing and updating the board matrix helps to strategically recruit board members. Once additional board members are recruited, it is important to provide cultural competency training. Cultural competency training is essential to ensure decisions respect and reflect the cultural values of the community. Training equips the board of directors to better understand and address disparities in care.

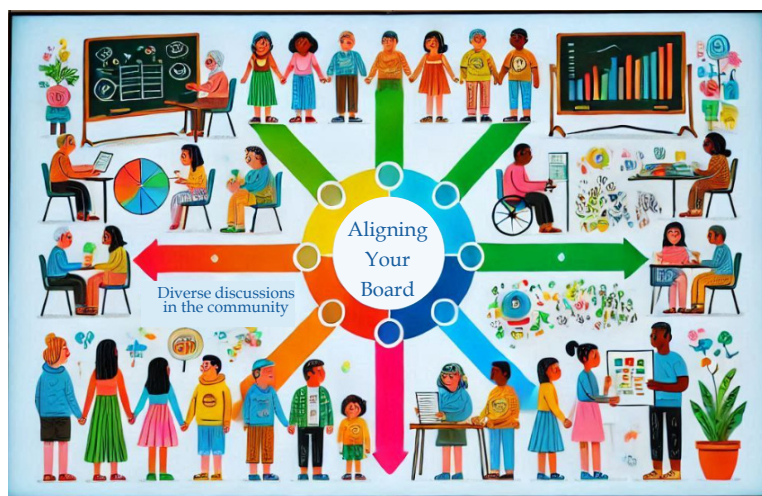
## **Providing Board Training and Education is Key to Effective Governance.**

Ongoing education and training ensure that board members remain effective and informed in their governance roles. This is particularly important for patient board members who may not have prior governance experience but bring invaluable lived perspectives. Training does not just include the HRSA requirements for boards, or roles and responsibilities, but how board meetings are conducted, how to make a motion, what is Robert Rules of Order, or how an executive session is

used. This education may make members want to sit on other non-profit boards and make a difference in their community. Finally, providing board members with a “board buddy” can provide enhanced support, accelerate their learning and build stronger relationships with other board members. This type of support often fosters a collaborative and inclusive board culture.

## **Leveraging Data for Decision Making.**

Data driven governance ensures that the board's decisions are rooted in factual insights about the community served. By analyzing data on patient outcomes (quality and financial metrics), service utilization and social drivers of health, the board of directors can identify gaps and prioritize initiatives effectively. Data should be provided in a method that all board members can understand; whether it be in their preferred language, through graphs, or using a dashboard. It is important that the data provided highlights key performance indicators and allows for open communication and discussion. Open lines of communication empower patient board members to see their input is valued and acted upon.



Aligning a community health center's board with patients served is not just a requirement; it's a strategic best practice that enhances trust, accountability and impact. By prioritizing patient representation, diversity and open communication, a board of directors can steer their health center to meet the needs of the community. Ultimately, a well aligned board ensures that the health center remains a pillar in the community, ensuring equity, access and quality care for all. By staying connected to the voices of those they serve, the board builds resilience and inspires trust in the community.

# Grace Health and SyncTimes: Transforming Integrated Care

At [Grace Health](#), delivering exceptional patient care while managing high volumes of appointments is a daily challenge. Recognizing the need for a more integrated approach, Grace Health partnered with SyncTimes to optimize their workflows and bridge care gaps, particularly in behavioral health integration.

## Streamlining Workflows and Enhancing Communication

When Grace Health set out to enhance their clinic's efficiency and patient experience, they turned to SyncTimes for an innovative solution. As a Federally Qualified Health Center serving 27,000 patients annually, Grace Health implemented SyncTimes to address inefficiencies, improve safety, and ensure seamless care coordination. The results have been remarkable.

## Enhanced Patient Experience

SyncTimes' self-rooming feature elevated patient satisfaction by creating a VIP experience. Patients are welcomed by name on tablets outside exam rooms, reinforcing Grace Health's commitment to high-tech, high-quality care. "We get great comments on our patient satisfaction surveys. People feel like they're getting VIP treatment," said Sonja Elder, CIO of Grace Health.

## Integrated Behavioral Health and Improved Communication

Grace Health also saw significant improvements in behavioral health integration. With the push of a button, providers can instantly notify behavioral health consultants about patients in need, ensuring timely and effective care. "Knowing where their resources are is huge for our teams," Elder added.

## Expansion and Future Impact

Since their initial deployment, Grace Health has expanded SyncTimes across 132 medical exam rooms and 17 dental rooms. With plans to integrate further with their EMR and onboard more staff, the impact continues to grow. "SyncTimes improves efficiency and job satisfaction," said Jill Wise, VP and COO. "Our care teams love it, and our patients notice the difference."

## Results That Matter

- 18% Reduction in Patient Wait Times
- 50% Faster Medical Assistant Responses
- Improved Room Utilization

To learn more, join Grace Health and SyncTimes for a MWCN-exclusive demo on Jan 22 @ 1pm ET.

WEBINAR

## Transforming Integrated Care with SyncTimes

Learn how Grace Health delivers better patient outcomes.

ALAN BUCKNUM  
SyncTimes CEO

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22 1PM ET VIRTUAL

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Grace Health  
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- Exclusion Monitoring
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- CHC Board Management

## ILLINOIS

### Various Positions

[Family Christian Health Center](#) in Harvey, IL, a federally qualified, state-of-the-art health center, has multiple openings: Family Practice Physicians, Nurse Practitioners and/or Physician Assistants, Nurse Practitioner-Psychiatry, and Certified Medical Assistants. Excellent benefit package, competitive salary, student loan forgiveness programs. Please contact Regina Martin, HR Manager at [rmartin@familychc.org](mailto:rmartin@familychc.org) or 708-589-2017 for more information.

## IOWA

### Various Positions

[Primary Health Care, Inc. \(PHC\)](#) is an FQHC in Des Moines, Ames, & Marshalltown, Iowa. Current openings include: Dentist, Dental Hygienist, Nurse Practitioner/Physician Assistant, & Clinical Services Manager for The Project. We are almost always hiring RNs, LPNs, & Medical Assistants as well. Find the right opportunity for you at our [Career Center](#). Contact [humanresources@phcinc.net](mailto:humanresources@phcinc.net) with questions.

## MICHIGAN

### Various Positions

MyCare Health Center is seeking to hire the following positions in Macomb County: Dental Biller, Medical Biller (PT) and, Director of Quality and Compliance. We offer competitive wages, a generous PTO and benefits package. Please send resumes to [hr@mycarehealthcenter.org](mailto:hr@mycarehealthcenter.org) to apply or go to "Careers" on our website at [www.mycarehealthcenter.org](http://www.mycarehealthcenter.org).

### Various Positions

Metro Detroit's Western Wayne Family Health Centers (WWFHC) is seeking vibrant Physicians, Psychiatrists, Behavioral Health Therapists, Medical Assistants, Dental Hygienists, Dental Assistants, and Customer Service Representatives. Forward your CV/resume to [humanresources@wwfhc.org](mailto:humanresources@wwfhc.org). Please see our "jobs" on our website at [www.wwfhc.org](http://www.wwfhc.org). We offer competitive salaries and a full benefit package including (medical and dental 100% free for employee only coverage, vision, and 403B with 4% match).

### Behavioral Health Consultant

[The Center for Family Health](#) is hiring a Behavioral Health Consultant. This is a full-time, salaried position with a \$1,000 sign-on bonus. Located in Jackson, MI, we are a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) offering multi-specialty services in Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, and Ob/Gyn. For more details, reach out to Nicole, HR Generalist, at [napplegate@cfhinc.org](mailto:napplegate@cfhinc.org) or check the full job listing at <https://centerforfamilyhealth.applicantpool.com/jobs/>.

Submit your postings for our next newsletter to Renee Ricks at [rricks@midwestclinicians.org](mailto:rricks@midwestclinicians.org)

## Various Positions

[Great Lakes Bay Health Centers](#) is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) looking for several types of providers. We have vacancies for a Staff Physician in Saginaw, a Staff Dentist in Bad Axe & Saginaw, a Staff Optometrist in Saginaw, a Licensed Master of Social Work in Saginaw, and a Nurse Practitioner/Physician Assistant with 3-5 years of experience for our Integrated Care sites in Saginaw and Midland! For more information, please contact HR Recruiter Morgan ([mcouchman@glbhealth.org](mailto:mcouchman@glbhealth.org) or [hr@glbhealth.org](mailto:hr@glbhealth.org)).

## Various Positions

[Grace Health](#) is excited to announce we are searching for several Registered Nurses and School-Based Behavioral Health Therapists. We offer competitive wages and up to 3 weeks of PTO in the first year! Other perks include no nights or weekend work. If you're passionate and ready to make an impact please contact Lauren DeWitt, Recruiting Specialist, at [lauren.dewitt@gracehealthmi.org](mailto:lauren.dewitt@gracehealthmi.org).



## MISSOURI

### Various Positions

Missouri's Community Health Centers welcomes you! Experience what it's like to work with a team of talented and passionate health professionals and have a Career That Counts! Primary Care Medical, Dental, Behavioral Health Professional, and a variety of administrative and other clinical opportunities available throughout our great state. Browse our jobs at [mhpps.org](http://mhpps.org) or contact [jadamson@mo-pca.org](mailto:jadamson@mo-pca.org) to learn more.

### Various Positions

ACCESS Family Care has the following openings: Chief Medical Officer who is a visionary leader passionate about rural healthcare and improving patient care, and compassionate Nurse Practitioners to join our team in Anderson and Carthage MO. To see more information on these openings, please go to our website [www.accessfamilycare.org](http://www.accessfamilycare.org) and click on the career tab.

## OHIO

### Various Positions

[Lifecare Family Health & Dental Center](#) in Stark County has multiple openings due to expansion. Current openings include Assistant Medical Director, Dentist and Behavioral Health Nurse Practitioner. We offer competitive wages and benefits package for full time employees. Please contact Dottie Wallick at 330-454-2000 extension 222 or email [dwallick@lifecarefhdc.org](mailto:dwallick@lifecarefhdc.org) for more information.

### Various Positions

[The HealthCare Connection](#) is a local, non-profit providing primary care services to low-income and medically underserved communities. Click the link below to learn more about our career opportunities. Apply today! <https://recruitingbypaycor.com/career/CareerHome>.

Submit your postings for our next newsletter to Renee Ricks at [ricks@midwestclinicians.org](mailto:ricks@midwestclinicians.org)

### General Dentist

[Five Rivers Health Centers](#) seeks General Dentist for our Dayton Public School-Based Health Center 3days/week. FRHC offers competitive salary and benefits including generous Time Off Paid and incentive programs, student loan repayment options, and signing bonus. Contact Kayli Feltner, People Specialist at [Kayli.feltner@frhc.org](mailto:Kayli.feltner@frhc.org) for more information or find us at [fiverivershealthcenters.org/careers](http://fiverivershealthcenters.org/careers).

### Various Positions

Looking for a career in Healthcare? [Fairfield Community Health Center \(FCHC\)](#) is hiring. We have a beautiful, newly renovated clinic, offer great benefits which includes up to 13 paid holidays off, PTO starting as of day 1, tuition reimbursement as well as the possibility of working a hybrid schedule, depending on the position. Visit our website at [www.FCHC.org/careers](http://www.FCHC.org/careers) or send a resume to [careers@fairfieldchc.org](mailto:careers@fairfieldchc.org).

### Various Positions

[Community Health Centers of Greater Dayton](#) is seeking Nurse Practitioner and Physician eager and ready to serve the community. No weekends and loan repayment. Use link <https://communityhealthdayton.org/careers-opportunities.php> to apply and see additional opportunities. Community Health Centers of Greater Dayton is seeking experienced Finance Director. Use link <https://communityhealthdayton.org/careers-opportunities.php> to apply.

## Healthy & Easy Game Day Recipe: *Buffalo Cauliflower Wings*

These vegan-friendly Buffalo Cauliflower Wings are baked until crispy, and are perfect for Game Day as an easy and healthy appetizer!



### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 head cauliflower, cut into florets
- olive oil spray (or 1 tbsp for brushing on)
- baking sheet)
- 1/2 c flour
- 1/2 c water
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1/4 c Frank's hot sauce (or your favorite hot sauce)
- 1 tsp honey or agave syrup
- 1 tsp salt
- To serve: Blue Cheese Dressing (traditional or vegan)

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 450 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with foil, and spray or brush with olive oil. Cut your cauliflower into small bite-size pieces.
2. Mix all ingredients except cauliflower in a large mixing bowl. Add cauliflower and toss. If there's not enough sauce to fully coat your cauliflower, add a little more water and toss again. Remove cauliflower from bowl with a slotted spoon, and place on baking sheet in a single layer. NOTE: Depending on the size of your bowl, it might be easiest to add and remove cauliflower in small batches.
3. Roast 20-25 minutes. If you want them extra crispy, switch the oven to broil the last 5-10 minutes (but watch to make sure they don't burn).
4. Drizzle more hot sauce over cauliflower. Serve hot with blue cheese dressing (or other preferred sauce).

Resource:  
<https://champagne-tastes.com/buffalo-cauliflower-wings/>