

Hackensack Meridian *Health* Launches Program To Connect Patients with Community Resources to Create a Healthier New Jersey

Health network's partnership with NowPow is the largest program of its kind in the U.S. pioneering a more holistic and equitable approach to health.

August 12, 2021 — Edison, NJ — Hackensack Meridian *Health*, New Jersey's largest and most comprehensive health network, has partnered with NowPow, a digital platform to provide patients with personalized referrals to community resources that will help them continue to improve their health after they leave Hackensack Meridian *Health's* care. The network is NowPow's largest program in the nation, with more than 80,000 patients screened and more than 21,000 referrals for assistance within the first few weeks of launch.

"It is essential for health networks to take a holistic approach to their patients' health and we are proud to partner with NowPow to help address the social needs impacting our communities," said Robert C. Garrett, FACHE, CEO, Hackensack Meridian *Health*. "Our mission is to transform health care and part of this mission is creating innovative ways to bridge health equity gaps and ensure that all patients achieve their best health."

NowPow's personalized community referral platform connects patients to local resources in their communities, ranging from food banks, rental assistance, transportation assistance to behavioral health, caregiver and mental health support. Key community organizations are partnering with Hackensack Meridian *Health* to support their effort including the Community FoodBank of New Jersey and Fulfill Food Bank at the Jersey Shore with the goal of onboarding many more community partners in the near future. The network has a goal of reaching 1.2 million patients in the first year throughout Hackensack Meridian's 17 hospitals and more than 500 patient care locations.

Increasingly, health care providers understand that they must focus beyond the radar of traditional healthcare to address issues that greatly impact health - housing and food insecurity, transportation issues, substance abuse and other social issues. The goal is to eliminate gaps in health outcomes based on race, ethnicity and socioeconomic factors.

"Hackensack Meridian *Health* is leading in this new comprehensive — all needs, all people — approach to patient care," said Rachel Kohler, CEO, NowPow. "Recognizing that one-size does not fit all, Hackensack Meridian *Health* has established an evidence-based community referral infrastructure that seamlessly meets the unique and ever-changing needs of all patients and care teams. This is key to accelerating the shift to more equitable, value-based care."

Hackensack Meridian *Health* has more than 6,100 clinicians trained on the NowPow platform, which is embedded in its electronic medical record, Epic, allowing care teams to readily screen patients for additional health needs and provide the necessary referrals at

the point of care. This comprehensive program comes at a critical time as New Jersey continues to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and health equality is more important than ever.

Hackensack Meridian *Health* is currently utilizing NowPow's whole community suite of tools which includes PowRx, NowRx and FindRx to support a wide array of patient needs. All of these tools create personalized referrals to high quality, verified services in more than 100 languages and can be shared by email, print or text message.

NowPow's PowRx platform, integrated with Epic, the network's electronic medical record system, allows Hackensack Meridian *Health's* care team to refer patients to community resources, connect referrals with the patient's medical record and receive confirmation once these social services are delivered. To further extend care, including during times of crises and in the community, NowRx provides all Hackensack Meridian *Health* team members the ability to quickly connect patients and families with community resources without using personally identifiable information. FindRx gives the community access to NowPow's referral database so they can easily self-serve to find resources they need as well as share referrals with others. Hackensack Meridian *Health's* FindRx is available at <https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/CommunityServices>

"This partnership with NowPow is a true testament to the work we are doing at Hackensack Meridian *Health* to advance health equity and help our patients throughout their entire health journey," said Nicole R. Harris-Hollingsworth, EDD, MCHES, vice president of Social Determinants at Hackensack Meridian *Health*. "Hackensack Meridian *Health* and NowPow's partnership aims to fill any gaps and overcome obstacles our population is facing. We are dedicated to helping our patients live their healthiest lives, whether they are inside our hospitals or living their life outside in our communities."

Due to COVID-19, New Jersey's food insecurity rate is projected to rise by 56% - higher than the increases nationally and in neighboring states.

"Our partnership with Hackensack Meridian Health has come at a critical time when our communities are experiencing disproportionate increases in food insecurity," said Carlos Rodriguez, President & CEO of the Community FoodBank of New Jersey. "We are happy to be a part of this initiative, as we are deeply committed to pursuing a holistic approach to food insecurity that involves workforce development initiatives, nutrition education, and connecting households to critical budgetary resources, in addition to providing food. NowPow is an opportunity to expand on this commitment and to help promote equity and food security across the Garden State."

Fulfill FoodBank at the Jersey Shore is also in partnership with Hackensack Meridian *Health*. The program started last fall and has been working with local hospitals – including Hackensack Meridian *Health* - to identify patients who are struggling with food insecurity.

“The referrals by hospital professionals have ensured our neighbors in need receive food and social services,” said Lauren Holman, board chair of Fulfill FoodBank at the Jersey Shore. “The partnership now with NowPow is an extension of that relationship, and we are proud to work together on this initiative at a critical time where the demand for food has increased by 40 percent. Families will be fed and receive assistance from Fulfill’s Resource Connections Team with applications for SNAP (food stamps), affordable housing, affordable healthcare, senior services, utilities assistance, and more, with the goal of getting families back on their feet,” added Holman.

ABOUT HACKENSACK MERIDIAN HEALTH

Hackensack Meridian *Health* is a leading not-for-profit health care organization that is the largest, most comprehensive and truly integrated health care network in New Jersey, offering a complete range of medical services, innovative research and life-enhancing care.

Hackensack Meridian *Health* comprises 17 hospitals from Bergen to Ocean counties, which includes three academic medical centers – Hackensack University Medical Center in Hackensack, Jersey Shore University Medical Center in Neptune, JFK Medical Center in Edison; two children’s hospitals - Joseph M. Sanzari Children’s Hospital in Hackensack, K. Hovnanian Children’s Hospital in Neptune; nine community hospitals – Bayshore Medical Center in Holmdel, Mountainside Medical Center in Montclair, Ocean Medical Center in Brick, Palisades Medical Center in North Bergen, Pascack Valley Medical Center in Westwood, Raritan Bay Medical Center in Old Bridge, Raritan Bay Medical Center in Perth Amboy, Riverview Medical Center in Red Bank, and Southern Ocean Medical Center in Manahawkin; a behavioral health hospital – Carrier Clinic in Belle Mead; and two rehabilitation hospitals - JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute in Edison and Shore Rehabilitation Institute in Brick.

Additionally, the network has more than 500 patient care locations throughout the state which include ambulatory care centers, surgery centers, home health services, long-term care and assisted living communities, ambulance services, lifesaving air medical transportation, fitness and wellness centers, rehabilitation centers, urgent care centers and physician practice locations. Hackensack Meridian *Health* has more than 36,000 team members, and over 7,000 physicians and is a distinguished leader in health care philanthropy, committed to the health and well-being of the communities it serves.

The network’s notable distinctions include having four hospitals among the top in New Jersey by *U.S. News and World Report*. Other honors include consistently achieving Magnet® recognition for nursing excellence from the American Nurses Credentialing Center and being named to *Becker’s Healthcare’s* “150 Top Places to Work in Healthcare/2019” list.

The Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine opened in 2018, the first private medical school in New Jersey in more than 50 years, welcomed its third class of students in 2020 to its On3 campus in Nutley and Clifton. Additionally, the network partnered with Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center to find more cures for cancer faster while ensuring that patients have access to the highest quality, most individualized cancer care when and where they need it.

Hackensack Meridian *Health* is a member of AllSpire Health Partners, an interstate consortium of leading health systems, to focus on the sharing of best practices in clinical care and achieving efficiencies.

For additional information, please visit www.HackensackMeridianHealth.org.