



CCHN NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2021

Community Health Center News

CHCs Critical to Vaccine Effort

Patient and Public Participation Essential to Success

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Community Health Centers (CHCs) have been key to fighting COVID-19, particularly in underserved and hard-to-reach populations. To make sure these populations receive the vaccine, CHCs are also participating in the vaccine distribution effort. CHCs in urban and rural areas are working with local public health departments and other area partners to implement vaccine administration in their communities, including for essential workers, agricultural workers, elderly, and other vulnerable Coloradans

Right now, Governor Polis is striving to vaccinate all people over the age of 70 who want to be vaccinated by the end of February. In order to achieve this initial goal, as of Jan. 25, the governor has asked CHCs to administer about 15% of the vaccines for this population, making CHCs a key component to the success of the 70+ effort. Hospitals and retail pharmacies will administer another 60%, while community partners and local public health agencies will administer 15%, and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Governor's Office Equity Task Force will account for the remaining 10% of distribution.

Currently, Colorado receives weekly allocations of the FDA-approved vaccines from Moderna and Pfizer. Two doses of these vaccines, administered a few weeks apart, are required for full effectiveness. Colorado CHCs are following state and federal guidance to administer the vaccines in phases to ensure the most vulnerable populations are protected first, while supply continues to be limited.

[A Geiger Gibson report](#) reveals that an estimated 47% of all Community Health Center patients meet criteria for the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defined "Phase 1" of vaccination. This aligns with data that shows how CHC patients are more likely to have multiple chronic conditions as a result of income, living conditions, adequate diet, and other stressors.

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Hesitancy to receive the lifesaving COVID-19 vaccine has been observable, particularly among populations that have lower trust with health care because of historic discrimination. CHCs were established to provide health care in underserved communities and often bridge language and cultural barriers to do so. They will play a critical role in providing information about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine, as well as providing the vaccine itself.

CHCs and other health care providers are doing everything they can to distribute the vaccine in an ever-changing situation. In order to be successful, everyone including health care providers, patients, and the public needs to participate. Here are a few key points to remember:

- **The situation is changing daily.** The vaccine supply, phases of eligibility, staffing capacity, and potential approval of vaccines from more manufacturers, among other factors, all contribute to making the situation fluid.
- **Initial supplies are limited.** It may take several months to distribute the vaccine to everyone who wants or needs it. However, more manufacturers are developing and testing additional versions of the vaccine, which may increase the supply.
- **Get COVID-19 vaccine facts from trusted sources.** CCHN recommends the [Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment \(CDPHE\)](#), the [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#), and reputable news sources.
- **Both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines have demonstrated strong protection against the virus.** Moderna's two-dose vaccine is 94% effective in preventing COVID-19, while Pfizer's vaccine was 95% effective in preventing infection after two doses. That's more than twice as effective as the annual flu shot.
- **The vaccines were tested on a diverse group of volunteers.** The vaccines were effective regardless of weight, race, ethnicity, or age if over 16 years of age (the vaccines have not been approved for people under 16 – clinical trials are being run now for children and youth). The vaccines were not tested on people who are pregnant or breastfeeding, though they can choose to get the vaccine if they are part of an eligible group.
- **Both the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines require two doses.** The Pfizer vaccine requires two doses 21 days apart; the Moderna vaccine requires two doses 28 days apart. The second dose must be completed with the same vaccine product as the first dose. Getting one dose provides only partial effectiveness.
- **Getting the COVID-19 vaccine is the right thing to do.** Vaccination will prevent you from spreading COVID-19 to your loved ones and vulnerable members of your community. You'll also help protect children and people who are not included in the current vaccine distribution phases. Governor Polis has called the vaccine "a gateway to life without this crisis." Getting the two-dose vaccination is one small way to help achieve widespread immunity and bring an end to the pandemic.
- **The fight is not over.** Until vaccines are widely distributed, it is important to continue to wear masks, wash your hands, and avoid in-person interactions with people outside of your household.



Staff at Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc. receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

Clínica Tepeyac is now Tepeyac Community Health Center

Clinica Tepeyac has a new name, logo, website address, and email address format. The Community Health Center is now known as **Tepeyac Community Health Center**, and is accessible online at <https://www.tepeyachealth.org/>.



Pueblo Community Health Center Celebrates Completing Their Leadership Development Program

Beginning in December 2019, Pueblo Community Health Center (PCHC) began the Leadership Development Program (LDP) administered by the Colorado Center for Nursing Excellence. This year-long program, developed especially for Community Health Centers, was attended by all PCHC leadership. The goal of this work was to build skills and provide tools to support team members, improve communication, enhance joy at work, and reduce burnout.

In addition to learning sessions, one-on-one coaching, and individual assessments, the PCHC staff also worked on Capstone projects focused on improving the Uniform Data System measures at their Community Health Center. Projects included improving colorectal cancer screenings and outcomes, increasing tobacco screenings, reducing employee turnover, expanding childhood immunizations, and many more. Through the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020, the PCHC LDP team managed to improve their measures, sometimes by more than 20% from where they began, and work with their teams to complete their projects.

CCHN staff congratulates the PCHC leadership staff on the wonderful presentation of their Capstone projects on Jan. 13. Their hard work and dedication to improving outcomes for PCHC patients, and improving the culture for their staff is admirable. CCHN staff also extend a thank you to the Colorado Center for Nursing Excellence Leadership Development team, Dr. Deb Center and Michelle Cheuvront, for the facilitation of this extremely important training.

STRIDE Community Health Center Recognized as Age Friendly Health System Participant

STRIDE Community Health Center achieved Level One recognition as an Age Friendly Health System participant, by taking key steps to improve care for older patients. STRIDE achieved this initial milestone with a pilot team of clinicians and operations professionals, run by expert geriatrician Dr. Barbara Morris. The pilot team made sure that STRIDE's proposed steps and actions were not only in line with requirements, but organizationally achievable. In the next phase of the process, STRIDE is implementing these proposed actions to become more universally accessible to persons of all ages.

The Age Friendly Health System classification framework, developed by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI), is built based on what the IHI calls the "4 Ms": What Matters, Medication, Mentation, and Mobility. More information on these four principles can be found on the IHI's [website](#).

"Taking the necessary steps to become an Age Friendly Health System is just one component of our ambitious, multi-dimensional growth strategy," said Ben Wiederholt, CEO of STRIDE. "Receiving this initial recognition is certainly an honor, and we couldn't have reached this milestone without the guidance and leadership of Dr. Morris. At the same time, this is only the beginning of the big developments currently in the works, which will even further increase our accessibility and our reach. It's an indication of some great things to come in STRIDE's future, as we navigate this unprecedented time for accessible community health care for our aging population."

Remembrance and Appreciation of Jill Phillips

CCHN staff were saddened to hear of the passing of Jill Phillips in November 2020. Ms. Phillips served Colorado CHCs in a variety of roles at CCHN, CHAMPS, and CCMCN for years. She is deeply missed.

“Jill was a wonderful employee and she made many great contributions to CCHN and helped it move forward in numerous ways,” said Annette Kowal, president and CEO of CCHN. “I also had the privilege of calling Jill my friend outside of work and I am humbled by her kindness and compassion for everyone around her.”

At the time of her passing, Ms. Phillips was business and operations manager for the Colorado Community Managed Care Network, a sister organization of CCHN’s that serves Colorado CHCs. During her years of service to the Community Health Center movement, she also worked for CCHN and another of CCHN’s sister organizations, the Community Health Association of Mountain/Plains States. She held a bachelor of science degree from Colorado State University and a certificate in human resources. Her prior non-profit experience included accounting and office administration.

Ms. Phillips was smart, thoughtful, creative, collaborative, and enjoyed a good laugh. We miss her.

Pueblo Community Health Center is Building New Clinic



Pueblo Community Health Center construction at East 8th and La Cross streets in Pueblo

In October 2020, Pueblo Community Health Center (PCHC) broke ground on their new clinic at East 8th and La Cross streets in Pueblo. The three-story clinic will include a pharmacy, lab, dental services, and medical and behavioral health care. The clinic, anticipated to open in October 2021, will allow PCHC to serve an additional 5,000 patients in the next 10 years. The current Park Hill clinic staff will relocate to the new building once completed.

The project, a \$24 million, state-of-the-art, net-zero energy facility will be the largest investment in Pueblo’s east side neighborhood in decades. In addition to traditional financing and its own cash, PCHC has secured New Market Tax Credits and a lead gift from The Colorado Trust.

Colorado CHCs Collecting Quality Awards – Congratulations!

Tepeyac Community Health Center was among the nine CHCs nationwide chosen as [2020 Million Hearts® Hypertension Control Champions](#). This year’s Champions achieved blood pressure control in 80% or more of their adult patients with hypertension. High Plains Community Health Center received the award in 2018, and Denver Health Community Health Services in 2014.

In addition, Denver Health and MarillacHealth received Shirley Hass Schuett Quality Awards from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) for their breast and cervical cancer screening work. These awards are given to Cancer Prevention and Early Detection/Women’s Wellness Connection organizations that provided the highest quality care to women, demonstrated by meeting performance indicators and improving performance.

New Mobile Health Center at Denver Health

In November 2020, Denver Health opened a new mobile “site,” which brings high-quality care right to their patients, many of whom would otherwise not have access. This new Mobile Health Center provides COVID-19 services as a priority.

Denver Health CEO Robin Wittenstein, Ed.D., FACHE says "Our hope is that these efforts will immediately help reduce the rates of COVID-19 cases through increased access to testing, education, and supportive resources. The Mobile Health Center is yet another example of Denver Health fulfilling its role as an Anchor Institution by committing our resources to improve the well-being of the communities we serve."



Policy Update

State Legislative Session Begins

The legislative session of Colorado's 73rd General Assembly began on Jan. 13. The first part of the session lasted only three days and legislators focused on essential business such as swearing in new legislators, appointing committee members, and passing seven time-sensitive bills. The legislature is expected to be in recess until mid-February when they will resume for the remainder of the legislative session; however, their official return will depend on COVID-19 infection rates and public health orders.

Throughout the 2021 legislative session, CCHN and CHCs will be closely watching the state's health care budget and legislative items that could impact CHCs and the patients they serve. These include Medicaid and the Accountable Care Collaborative (ACC), Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+), the Primary Care Fund (PCF), the Colorado Indigent Care Program (CICP), access to primary care, health care affordability, telemedicine, and Colorado's health care workforce.

Federal Landscape Shifts, Pandemic and Economy Are Top Priorities

CCHN is monitoring what is happening at the national level and how CHCs will be impacted by federal policy under the new administration and Congress. After months of failing to agree on much-needed COVID-19 relief legislation, Congress finally passed H.R. 133, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, which was signed into law on Dec. 27. H.R. 133 will provide necessary funding for the continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic, although none specifically designated for CHCs. The bill included renewed normal annual funding for the CHC program and critical workforce programs for the remainder of the current federal fiscal year through Federal Fiscal Year 2023.

As the year moves forward, CCHN and CHCs will continue to work closely with Colorado's Congressional Delegation, including newly elected members, and the new administration to support the essential role of CHCs during and after the pandemic.

CHAMPS Update

Four Coloradans Among CHAMPS 2020 Award Recipients

The 2020 Community Health Association of Mountain/Plains States (CHAMPS) Awards Ceremony, held virtually on Nov. 20, 2020, honored eight individuals, including four from Colorado, for their exceptional contributions to the Health Center movement. The four Colorado honorees are:



Exceptional Board Leadership Award

Marge Gavenda, Board Secretary and Development Committee Chair, Summit Community Care Clinic.

Marge is simply one of those exceptional board members who selflessly gives her time, energy, heart, and soul to Summit Community Care Clinic.



Exceptional Clinical Leadership Award

Chad Hess PA-C, Associate Medical Director, Pueblo Community Health Center.

Chad takes pride not only in delivering quality care to his patients, but also in helping his organization continuously improve and his staff practice at the top of their professions.



Outstanding Emergency Response Leadership Award

Debby Myers, RDH, Infection Prevention/Control Manager, Salud Family Health Centers.

Debby is passionate about infection control and has worked tirelessly since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the safety of staff and patients.



Outstanding Legislative Leadership Award

Tracy Johnson, PhD, Colorado State Medicaid Director, Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing.

Dr. Johnson has made a big impact for Colorado Health Centers, working to reduce barriers to high quality care and minimizing the impacts of COVID-19 on Medicaid recipients and providers.

Visit the [CHAMPS Awards](#) webpage to learn more about this year's awardees, watch recordings from the virtual ceremony, and remember awardees from prior years.

CCHN Update

Covering Kids and Families 2020 Wrap-Up and 2021 Plans

Covering Kids and Families (CKF), a project of CCHN, works to improve how Coloradans enroll in affordable health coverage through Health First Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid Program), Child Health Plan *Plus* (CHP+), and private insurance through Connect for Health Colorado. This is done by supporting a network of over 465 community-based enrollment assisters across Colorado, including at CHCs, community-based organizations, and more; and by advocating on behalf of assisters and low-income Coloradans for improved policies and systems so that all Coloradans can have health coverage, often the first step to health care.

Throughout 2020, CKF advocated for policies and system changes that would enable Coloradans retain health coverage more easily. CKF encouraged the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) to release guidance on remote enrollment assistance during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, partnered with HCPF and other stakeholders to find a solution for Health First Colorado and CHP+ members whose eligibility mail is returned, and met with HCPF department leadership every other month and HCPF eligibility leadership every month to highlight and resolve barriers that members and assisters were facing in health coverage eligibility and enrollment.

In 2021, CKF will continue to work with HCPF to ensure that when the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency ends, eligible members remain enrolled in coverage and experience minimal barriers to retaining coverage. To support CKF's network, CKF will maintain a high-level of expertise on relevant rules from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, especially during the federal administration transition. CKF will also continue to advocate that rules and guidance are implemented in Colorado with minimal barriers to enrollment and follow, analyze, and report on Health First Colorado and CHP+ enrollment changes and trends. More information about CKF and CKF's quarterly enrollment analyses are available at ckf.cchn.org.

CCHN Staff Update - Christi Styer

Christi Styer is the Workforce Manager at Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN), joining CCHN in October 2020. Her primary focus is leading CCHN's efforts to support CHCs around health professions education and training (HP-ET) initiatives and the workforce pipeline. Ms. Styer has previous experience working in a variety of health care settings, as an undergraduate/graduate teaching assistant for health professions, and is currently serving on a board of directors focused on aging services and senior living. She attended Metropolitan State University of Denver where she earned a bachelor's degree in speech, language, and hearing sciences. She later earned a master's degree in health administration. Ms. Styer is a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) - Colorado Chapter. In her free time, she enjoys providing career counseling to college students and adults, hiking with her husband and two children, roasting coffee beans, and reading non-fiction.

Upcoming Events

CCHN P&I

Feb. 17, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., virtually

Registration is now open for CCHN's 2021 Policy & Issues (P&I) Forum. The event will include an overview of the state legislative and budget process, a dive into CCHN's policy priorities and the 2021 legislative session, a policy panel focused on the current health care policy environment, and CCHN's annual advocacy awards ceremony. [Register for the CCHN P&I](#).

NACHC P&I

March 15 -18, virtually

Registration is now open for NACHC's 2021 virtual Policy & Issues Forum. The event will provide an opportunity to hear from national leaders and peers about areas of concern to the Community Health Center movement. [Register for the NACHC P&I](#).

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About CCHN

The Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN) is the unified voice for Colorado's 20 Community Health Centers (CHCs) and their patients. CHCs provide a health care home for more than 852,000 of their community members – more than one in seven people in Colorado - from 62 of the state's 64 counties. Without CHCs, hundreds of thousands of Colorado's low-income families and individuals would have no regular source of health care. CCHN's mission is to increase access to high quality health care for people in need in Colorado. For more information about CCHN, please visit <https://cchn.org/>.



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