

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE EMBARGOED UNTIL FEBRUARY 15

Community Health Centers Mark One Year of Vaccinating the Underserved

This week, the Community Health Center COVID-19 Vaccination Program marks a milestone in protecting underserved populations from a virus that has claimed more than 865,000 lives and infected millions – including [INSERT STATE NUMBERS HERE]. From the start, equity has been the North Star of the Biden Administration’s national vaccine strategy, and Community Health Centers have played a central role in protecting populations who disproportionately suffered higher rates of infection from COVID-19. They include people who work in essential jobs that put them at higher risk, agricultural and migrant workers, public housing residents, the elderly and people experiencing homelessness, and low-income families who may lack access to essential health care services, live in rural areas, or are racial and ethnic minorities. Health centers have provided 19.2 million COVID-19 shots, with over two in three shots at a health center administered to people of color [INCLUDE SHOTS GIVEN BY HEALTH CENTERS IN YOUR state].

Despite surges of variants, the program is a documented success. There are fewer COVID-19 deaths and infections in areas of the country where a health center is located, according to [findings from NACHC and the Morehouse School of Medicine’s National COVID-19 Resiliency Network \(NCRN\)](#). The joint analysis compared the rate of infection and mortality from COVID in areas with a health center and areas without and found 200 fewer cases of infection and 9 fewer deaths per 100,000 people. The findings are a testament to the health center boots on the ground effort, bringing the shots to where the people are with mobile vaccination sites, testing and building vaccine confidence through culturally and linguistically tailored efforts to combat disinformation. Another key study led by Boston University School of Public Health and published in JAMA found that, as of July 2021, health centers administered 61.4 percent of their vaccines to people of color, compared to 40 percent of vaccines administered to racial and ethnic groups in the general population.

The Community Health Center Vaccination Program is an historic effort to target underserved populations in a pandemic and health centers are ideally suited for the task. They serve 14.5 million people living in poverty, 2.9 million people 65 and older, 19 million people who are of minority background, and 1.5 million homeless people.

“We’re proud that health centers have met the challenge of the COVID-19 public health emergency,” said XXX “They have saved lives by providing a trusted place for families to get vaccinated and get their questions answered. Health centers have been out in force, knocking on doors and administering the vaccines in farm fields, in mobile units, laundromats, schools, beyond the walls of the centers themselves, in the places where people congregate, live and work. This unprecedented effort demonstrates that a localized approach is effective against a global public health crisis.”

The more than two-year battle on the pandemic frontlines has exacted a toll on health care workers and health centers are no exception. Chronic workforce shortages are worsening due to problems that include exhaustion, trauma, COVID infections and recruitment challenges. Nearly half – 44 percent [INSERT STATE DATA IF AVAILABLE] health centers report they do not have adequate staff to administer vaccines as of January 2022.

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About National Association of Community Health Centers

Established in 1971, the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) serves as the national voice for America's Health Centers and as an advocate for health care access for the medically underserved and uninsured.