

Statement on Biden Administration’s Decision to Provide Community Health Centers with COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation

On Feb. 9, the Biden administration [announced](#) a program to partner on COVID-19 response with community health centers—sometimes called federally qualified health centers—through the direct allocation of vaccines. Beginning the week of Feb. 15, the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will select at least one community health center in each state to pilot the vaccine allocation under set criteria. At the outset, community health centers will be selected based on serving a large volume of hard-to-reach and disproportionately affected populations, including: 1. Individuals experiencing homelessness, 2. Public housing residents, 3. Migrant/seasonal agricultural workers or 4. Patients with limited English proficiency.

[HRSA and CDC](#) intend to increase the number of community health centers in the program after its pilot of approximately 250 community health centers nationwide. Community health centers participating in the program are required to follow West Virginia’s COVID-19 vaccination priority guidelines.

The West Virginia Primary Care Association (WVPCA), which represents the state’s 32 community health centers, has actively participated in the state’s Joint Interagency Task Force for Vaccines (JIATF). The WVPCA serves as a liaison and strategic coordinator on the JIATF for community health centers and the county vaccine clinics. Community health center vaccination efforts have been vital for West Virginians aged 65 and older and school personnel—whether vaccinating at a community health center or collaboratively with hospitals, local health departments, pharmacies, emergency management services and/or community volunteers at other sites.

“We are thankful for the Biden administration understanding the valuable role community health centers play in the COVID-19 pandemic response,” Sherri Ferrell, CEO of the WVPCA, said. “This allocation will help serve our most vulnerable residents and improve health equity in vaccine distribution.”

The COVID-19 vaccines provided to community health centers under this program are separate from the state’s weekly allocation. This program will increase the state’s weekly vaccine supply, not reallocate or reduce it.

About the West Virginia Primary Care Association

The West Virginia Primary Care Association represents the state’s 32 community health centers, which constitute the largest independent primary care network in the state. Community health centers provide primary care, and many offer specialty care, such as dental, behavioral health and school-based health services, and fill prescriptions at affiliated pharmacies. Services and prescriptions are provided to patients regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay. More than 478,000 West Virginians receive health care services from a community health center—one out of every four citizens.

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