



**COMMUNITY CARE  
NETWORK OF KANSAS**  
Health. Equity. Justice.

## 4 More Kansas Health Centers Join Federal Vaccine Initiative

*For Immediate Release*

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TOPEKA – The number of COVID-19 vaccinations administered in Kansas has been increasing steadily. In the past week, the state surpassed the 1 million mark – with more than 361,000 people fully vaccinated.

The progress has moved Kansas from the bottom tier of states to the middle of the pack when it comes to the percentage of people who've received at least one dose. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show 26 percent of Kansans in this category compared to 25 percent nationally.

Disparities continue to emerge, however, when segmenting the Kansas population by race and ethnicity. Data from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) show the rate at which White Kansans are being vaccinated is double the rate for Black or African American Kansans. The rate for Hispanic or Latino individuals is 70 percent less than for non-Hispanic or Latino. And the statistics are even worse for American Indian or Alaskan Native as well as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander people.

Such inequities are not unique to Kansas. That is why the federal government is sending additional doses straight to community health centers, which already reach underserved population groups hardest hit by the pandemic. There are 250 health centers receiving vaccines through the Health Center COVID-19 Vaccine Program, which launched last month. Seven hundred more health centers are being added over the course of the next six weeks.

Vibrant Health, Atchison Community Health Clinic, Genesis Family Health and HealthCore Clinic are members of the newest Kansas cohort, joining the Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas and

GraceMed Health Clinic already selected by the U.S. Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA).

The 700 health centers across the United States were chosen because they already serve a large volume of disproportionately affected populations such as minority groups and those with low income. Forty-one percent of Kansas health center patients are members of a racial or ethnic minority, despite being only 25 percent of the overall population. Similar trends exist for people living in poverty. Ninety percent of Kansas health center patients are at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line (FPL), while 28 percent of the general population is in that category.

The newly added Kansas community health centers will be able to support the federal initiative as soon as the doses arrive.

Vibrant Health received its first order of 300 Moderna and Johnson & Johnson doses from the federal government this week, and currently is vaccinating patients at its three locations in Kansas City. Vibrant CEO Patrick Sallee said the health center will partner with local organizations beginning in April to target the hardest hit communities and ensure they are reaching people of color.

“For Wyandotte County,” Sallee said, “this increase in vaccine availability is an important step toward achieving vaccine equity for a community that has been disproportionately impacted by this pandemic.”

He noted Vibrant also will use a mobile vaccination unit to reach residents through other local organizations and churches.

“The community health centers are strategically located throughout Kansas,” said Denise Cyzman, CEO of the Community Care Network of Kansas, “to reach the very people the White House has prioritized with this initiative. Long-established trust built with patients and community partners alike will aid health centers in this push to achieve vaccine equity.”

The Health Center COVID-19 Vaccine Program is designed as a separate, direct allocation process. The program supplements existing vaccine distribution channels already in place, and complements KDHE equity efforts.

Dr. Lee Norman, KDHE Secretary, emphasized the importance of providers entering patients’ race and ethnicity. He said that 25 percent or more of vaccinated persons are being registered as “other” or simply leaving the race/ethnicity category blank.

“Filling out race and ethnicity data helps us, as a state, to know how well or how poorly we’re doing at reaching populations that may be hard-to-reach,” Dr. Norman said. “It is used for no other purpose.”

Through Wednesday, the KDHE dashboard shows Kansas health centers have administered more than 70,000 doses of vaccine received from all sources. Their initial focus was getting shots in the arms of individuals identified in Phases 1 and 2 of the state’s vaccine distribution plan. Through the federal vaccine program and the state’s transition to Phases 3, 4 and 5, health centers will be able to better focus on their patient populations – those known to be disproportionately affected by the pandemic – and the distribution equity numbers will improve.

The Health Center COVID-19 Vaccine Program will continue expanding until all of the approximately 1,400 health centers across the country have been invited to participate. The infusion of additional vaccine doses will allow a more equitable distribution on the way to herd immunity.

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*About Community Care Clinic of Kansas: Community Care exists to achieve equitable access to high-quality, whole-person care for all Kansans, regardless of ability to pay. As the Primary Care Association (PCA) for Kansas, Community Care supports and strengthens its members through advocacy, education and communication. Community Care’s diverse membership includes Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), and Look-Alikes (LALs), as well as public and private nonprofit Community-Based Primary Care Clinics (CBPCCs) and Rural Health Clinics (RHCs).*