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## **HHS Secretary Encourages States to Use Community Health Centers in COVID-19 Vaccination Effort**

*Oregon CHCs Stand Ready to Expand Role in Vaccinating Communities Across the State*

Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar announced on Tuesday a series of major changes to increase supply of vaccines, extend eligibility to more seniors, and provide more locations for people to get shots that included community health centers (CHCs) along with pharmacies and mass vaccination sites.

"We're also activating our federally qualified community health centers for vaccination," Azar said during the Jan. 12 press conference. "Some of these community health centers are already being utilized by state plans, but every state should be using them. Community health centers have more than 13,000 delivery sites across America, and they have both particularly convenient locations and strong connections in low-income and minority communities."

Here are a few examples of Oregon community health centers playing an important role in vaccinating the community:

- [White Bird Clinic](#) is one of three provider groups partnering with Lane County Public Health to expand the Phase 1a COVID-19 vaccination effort. White Bird is donating its facilities and staff to help vaccinate Lane County's diverse group of healthcare providers.
- [Clackamas County Health Centers](#) is partnering with the state and local public health to prioritize vaccinators, first responders, and frontline health care providers.
- [Neighborhood Health Center](#) is working with Washington County to bring COVID-19 vaccinations on site to Neighborhood's BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) staff, many of whom live further away from a vaccination site.

"Oregon's 33 health centers have been providing front-line testing and care to thousands of COVID-19 patients during this global pandemic," said Joan Watson-Patko. "Health centers are uniquely positioned to assist in vaccinating communities made vulnerable across the state, many of which been disproportionately affected by COVID-19."

Oregon CHCs have seen over triple the COVID-19 positivity rate (18.4%) as the state average (5.8%) and over four and a half times the rate for racial and ethnic minorities (26.8%), according to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) data as of Dec. 17, 2020.

Oregon CHCs with over 100 employees began receiving vaccinations and vaccinating their staff last week. CHCs with less than 100 employees are partnering with other health care providers, such as a hospitals, other CHCs, or their local public health departments, to receive vaccines for their employees.

"Oregon's community health centers are already active in the vaccination effort and are prepared to expand this effort with additional doses and guidance," Watson-Patko said. "OPCA looks forward to continuing to work with Governor Brown and the OHA to mount a comprehensive vaccination program in the state, contain COVID-19, and safely reopen schools."

### **About Oregon's CHCs**

Oregon's community health centers deliver integrated medical, dental, and behavioral health services at

over 200 locations to the communities made vulnerable across the state. Over 466,000 Oregonians receive their care at a community health center, including one in four people on the Oregon Health Plan. Over 73% of patients live below the poverty line, and 94% live at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. Over 75% of community health centers have clinic sites serving rural communities, 30% of Oregon's community health centers are federally recognized as Health Care for the Homeless locations, and 33% are designated as Migrant Health Centers. Find out more about [Oregon's CHCs here](#).

### **About OPCA**

OPCA is a non-profit membership association of Oregon's 33 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), including one FQHC Look-Alike. FQHCs are also known as community health centers (CHCs). The organization's mission is to lead the transformation of primary care to achieve health equity for all.

OPCA believes all people, in Oregon and beyond, should have the chance to lead their healthiest lives and have access to equitable health care. Oregon Primary Care Association supports a network of community health centers that deliver exceptional health care to people in urban, rural and frontier communities who may otherwise not have access to services. By helping health centers apply innovative approaches to health care delivery and system challenges, OPCA is transforming primary care in Oregon and beyond. Follow us on Twitter [@OregonPCA](#) or on [Facebook](#)