



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Community Health Centers Expand Access to COVID-19 Diagnostic Testing in Milwaukee

Milwaukee, WI (4/27/2020) –Milwaukee’s Community Health Centers (CHCs, also known as Federally Qualified Health Centers) announced today that all five organizations have increased testing capacity and now offer COVID-19 diagnostic testing and care for their patients as well as community members without a regular doctor who have COVID symptoms. The expansion of COVID diagnostic testing at CHCs has been made possible with support from the state and county Emergency Operations Centers coupled with contributions from other community partners; including local health systems.

Individuals enrolled at a health center as well as people without a regular doctor **who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms** should call their nearest Community Health Center to determine if there is a need for a diagnostic testing appointment. It is very important that all people call before coming in. This will allow the health centers to limit exposure to patients as well as staff and help the community **#flattenthecurve**. Individuals who need more information on their closest health care center should call 211.

“It is critical that all people in Milwaukee have easy access to COVID-19 diagnostic testing and health care services in their own community -- especially those communities hit hardest by this virus,” said Jenni Sevenich, CEO of Progressive Community Health Centers. “Community Health Centers are there for you if you don’t have a regular doctor or usual place to get health care services.”

This expanded diagnostic testing is a collaborative effort among the Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association, Milwaukee’s five Community Health Centers, the area health systems and other members of the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership as well as the city, county and state to increase access to diagnostic testing in neighborhoods most impacted by the coronavirus.

“As Community Health Centers, we are dedicated to caring for residents who are underserved or may not have access to health care services,” said Tito Izard, MD President/CEO of Milwaukee Health Services, Inc. “Our centers help increase access for crucial primary care needs by reducing barriers such as cost, lack of insurance, distance, and language for patients. We will never hesitate to rise to the occasion to ensure our community is given an equal opportunity to be healthy - no matter what it takes.”

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“Community Health Centers are invaluable assets in Milwaukee,” said Mayor Tom Barrett. “They serve as medical homes to thousands of residents and provide outstanding primary care as well as behavioral health and dental care. I want to encourage all residents with symptoms, and those without a doctor, to please call for diagnostic testing. They can be rest assured, that when seeking health care, their safety and health information is protected. The more we test, the more we know about the spread of this disease, and the more we can keep each other safe and well.”

Alderwoman Chantia Lewis, who represents an area on Milwaukee's far northwest side that has been hit hard with COVID-19 infections among residents of long-term care facilities and those in low-income neighborhoods, said she welcomes the increased diagnostic testing and care for residents battling the coronavirus.

"The Community Health Centers are truly on the front-lines in our efforts to keep the public healthy and informed about COVID-19 and the best ways to prevent the spread of the deadly virus," Alderwoman Lewis said. "I thank and applaud the state and county Emergency Operations Centers, as well as local community partners and health systems, for recognizing the need, and working with my office, and others on the expansion of COVID diagnostic testing at CHCs."

“As we work to flatten the curve in Milwaukee County, we must understand who is infected with COVID-19 so that we can channel our resources to the communities that have been most impacted. We cannot underscore the importance of ramping up the testing capacity of local partners who have trusted relationships within our neighborhoods," said Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele. "This information will help our public health officials gain more insight into this novel disease and how to best fight it.”

COVID-19 Symptoms

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Body or muscle aches
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Loss of smell
- Loss of taste

Health Center Contact Information

- Gerald L. Ignace Indian Health Center: (414) 383-9526 | www.gliihc.net
- Milwaukee Health Services, Inc.: (414) 372-8080 | www.mhsi.org
- Outreach Community Health Centers: (414) 727-6320 | www.ochc-milw.org
- Progressive Community Health Centers: (414) 882-2040 | www.progressivechc.org
- Sixteenth Street Community Health Centers: (414) 672-1353 | www.sschc.org

Community Health Centers throughout the state provide quality mental health, medical, and dental services to over 300,000 Wisconsin residents each year. For more information on Wisconsin Health Centers, please visit www.wphca.org.