Community Health Center in NW Arkansas first to participate in new federal vaccine initiative

CONTACT:
LaShannon Spencer, Chief Executive Officer, CHCA
501.517.0842, lspencer@chc ar.org

Community Clinic, a Community Health Center based in Springdale, was chosen as the first in Arkansas to receive COVID-19 vaccines as part of a new federal distribution plan.

The Biden Administration announced last week that Community Health Centers across the country would receive direct shipments of the vaccine to help reach vulnerable populations. Federal officials said that it will likely take months to get the vaccine to all 1,300 CHCs throughout the nation. Initially, a select few CHCs, at least one in each state, will target vaccines to especially hard-to-reach patients. The program will take a few weeks to roll out.

Community Clinic serves nearly 40,000 patients each year with more than half being Latino and approximately 3,000 Marshallese. Serving such a significant number of patients who lack English language proficiency was an important criteria for the federal Health Resources Services Administration in choosing the first groups of CHCs for the initiative. Community Clinic's infrastructure and commitment to meeting distribution protocols also were important to HRSA.
Initially, Community Clinic will receive about **500 doses** weekly. That amount is expected to increase over time. More details will be known as the program expands nationally.

"Our mission is to reach people who may not feel comfortable going to a pharmacy or hospital and may lack access," said **Judd Semingson, chief executive officer of Community Clinic**. "Thankfully, our patients trust us. However, there are still many in our communities who are scared, don't know what to do about COVID-19 and have questions about the vaccines. We are well prepared and excited to help the state in this fight against the pandemic. This is what we do."

The exact date the vaccine will be available at Community Clinic hasn't been determined. HRSA has said it will take **3-5 weeks** for the first doses to arrive to the initial groups of centers selected.

**LaShannon Spencer, chief executive officer of Community Health Centers of Arkansas**, said CHCs have already helped in Searcy County, Drew County, and in Crittenden County distribute limited amounts of vaccines allocated by the Arkansas Department of Health.

"We recognize that the state has the lead role in the vaccine distribution for Arkansas," Spencer said. "We appreciate the confidence that the Biden administration has placed in CHCs. And, we will continue to partner with the Arkansas Department of Health in following protocols, including the categories set by the state for prioritizing individuals for their space in line to receive the vaccine."

She stressed that the CHC distribution of vaccines is in addition to - not subtracting from - the doses sent directly to state government.

Spencer said CHCA will provide more information as the federal government releases more vaccines to additional CHCs.

**About**: CHCs are non-profit entities fueled by patient revenue and federal grants meant to expand health care access for low-income, minority, and rural populations. CHCs provide many services including primary care, dental, behavioral health, and health education.

Altogether, **12 CHCs** in Arkansas serve more than **220,000 people** a year at more than **140 sites**. Nationally, CHCs serve **30 million patients** a year.
For more information on Community Health Centers in Arkansas, please visit: http://www.chc-ar.org/ and http://online.fliphtml5.com/xdknbymox/.

Community Health Centers of Arkansas, Inc.
119 South Izard Street, Little Rock, AR 72201 501-374-8225 www.chc-ar.org