



Media Advisory

September 26, 2023

Certainty on Medicaid Expansion Renews Hope for N.C. Safety-Net Providers & Patients

With the passage of the state budget ensuring a Dec. 1 launch of Medicaid expansion, community health center leaders anticipate wider availability of specialty services to underserved patients.

For too long, hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians have suffered from lack of health coverage, leading to an increase in mortality rates and progression of chronic diseases. Now with a launch date of December 1, 2023, set for Medicaid expansion, the North Carolina Community Health Center Association (NCCHCA) and our 43 health center members are relieved we will have increased support to better serve the health needs of N.C. communities.

“Medicaid expansion is a phenomenal milestone for N.C.’s community health centers, and it will greatly support the work safety-net providers do to care for historically underserved communities,” NCCHCA CEO Chris Shank commented.

Statewide, N.C. community health centers serve more than 250,000 uninsured patients each year, out of a total patient population of 752,000. Patients who have lacked access to care will be ecstatic to have an insurance card and the ability to receive specialty care, said Michelle Lewis, CEO of Triad Adult and Pediatric Medicine.

“Patients will probably say, ‘You mean, I can see an asthma specialist, or cardiologist, or orthopedist now, like others?! I can get cancer treatments now?!’ These will be some of the first thoughts of relief for patients who have struggled to get needed primary and specialty care services,” said Mrs. Lewis, who also serves as chair of the NCCHCA Board of Directors. “Patients will also feel appreciation for the policymakers and advocates who have fought for many years to expand Medicaid.”

NCCHCA and the providers we represent are grateful for the policymakers who led sustained efforts to expand Medicaid, including Governor Roy Cooper, Secretary Kody Kinsley, and Representative Donny Lambeth (R-Forsyth) – and others, including NC Senate President Pro Tempore Phil Berger and NC House Speaker Tim Moore, for helping to move Medicaid expansion across the finish line.

During a September 25 press conference, Secretary Kinsley reflected on his personal experience living in the coverage gap: “As some of you know, I grew up in North Carolina without health insurance. I know first-hand the struggle that families face when trying to weigh the risk of going without seeing the doctor or parents pushing off prescriptions because they can’t afford food for their kids.”

Well-prepared to serve as the primary medical home for new Medicaid beneficiaries, community health centers offer integrated, culturally sensitive, whole-person primary care services, plus wrap-around support like care management and transportation assistance, all in one package. Community health centers are also unique in offering dental care and behavioral health care integrated into many sites.

“This is a historical moment for North Carolina and our primary care providers, with Medicaid expansion soon to be effective,” said Mrs. Shank. “Hundreds of thousands of patients have hoped for an expansion of care that has now passed, and hundreds of community health center sites will soon have increased capacity to improve our state’s health outcomes and expand the health care workforce.”



North Carolina Community Health Center Association

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Find your nearest health center: <https://ncchca.org/find-a-health-center>.

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About NCCHCA:

The [North Carolina Community Health Center Association](https://ncchca.org) represents 43 Community Health Center (CHC) organizations that operate over 470 clinical sites in 86 N.C. counties and served 752,000 patients in 2022. CHCs (also known as federally qualified health centers, FQHCs) are federally funded, nonprofit, patient-governed organizations with a mission of providing integrated primary, dental, and behavioral health care in primarily underserved and rural areas, without regard for patients' insurance status or ability to pay.