

Press Release

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Community Health Centers Essential Points of Care for Low-Income Women Serving 1 in 5 low-income women of childbearing age, CHCs enhance access and reduce disparities

WASHINGTON and NEW YORK – A new report titled, “Role of Community Health Centers in Providing Services to Low-income Women,” released today by the Geiger Gibson /RCHN Community Health Foundation Research Collaborative in the Department of Health Policy at the George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services examines the significant role community health centers (CHCs) play in providing services to low-income women of childbearing age (defined as age 15-44). The authors found that nationally, community health centers provide a medical home for approximately 5.4 million women of childbearing age, or more than one in five low-income women annually. The report also addresses the role of CHCs in mitigating health disparities and identifies the challenges that they will need to overcome to expand capacity and serve a greater number of high-risk, low-income women.

“Community health centers demonstrated success bodes well for further mitigating disparities and generating cost savings as they expand their capacity to serve more low-income women. However, they will have to manage ongoing funding gaps and lack of a trained health care workforce to meet the increasing demand for care,” said Peter Shin, Ph.D., M.P.H. Associate Professor and Director of the Geiger Gibson Program in Community Health Policy, and lead author of this study.

Nationally, the number of women who sought health care at community health centers has increased by 94% over the past decade. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) contains several provisions, including \$11 billion in health center funding, Medicaid expansions, and the establishment of health insurance Exchanges, that could significantly aid health centers in further expanding capacity and ensuring favorable health care outcomes. However, community health centers face a number of obstacles related to provider shortages, reductions in federal base funding and threats to key provisions under the ACA. These challenges could undermine community health center expansion and in so doing, disproportionately weaken the health care infrastructure for low-income women, and threaten the potential for improved access and outcomes.

“Community health centers have a long and successful track record of providing high quality, cost effective care to women in low-income communities.” said Julio Bellber, president and CEO of the RCHN Community Health Foundation. “Every effort should be made to sustain and support health centers so that they can continue to address disparities and help improve care outcomes.”

To access the policy research brief, click

http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/departments/healthpolicy/dhp_publications/pub_uploads/dhpPublication_09822648-5056-9D20-3DF35D4E2F822F28.pdf

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About the Geiger Gibson / RCHN Community Health Foundation Research Collaborative

The Geiger Gibson Program in Community Health Policy, established in 2003 and named after human rights and health center pioneers Drs. H. Jack Geiger and Count Gibson, is part of the School of Public Health and Health Services at The George Washington University. It focuses on the history and contributions of health centers and the major policy issues that affect health centers, their communities, and the patients that they serve. Additional information about the Research Collaborative can be found online at www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/departments/healthpolicy/ggprogram or at rchnfoundation.org.

About the RCHN Community Health Foundation

The RCHN Community Health Foundation, founded in October 2005, is a not-for-profit foundation whose mission is to support community health centers through strategic investment, outreach, education, and cutting-edge health policy research. The only foundation in the country dedicated to community health centers, the Foundation builds on health centers' 40-year commitment to the provision of accessible, high quality, community-based healthcare services for underserved and medically vulnerable populations. The Foundation's gift to the Geiger Gibson program supports health center research and scholarship. For more information on RCHN CHF, visit www.rchnfoundation.org.

About the George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services:

Established in July 1997, the School of Public Health and Health Services brought together three longstanding university programs in the schools of medicine, business, and education that we have since expanded substantially. Today, more than 1,100 students from nearly every U.S. state and more than 40 nations pursue undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral-level degrees in public health. Our student body is one of the most ethnically diverse among the nation's private schools of public health. <http://sphhs.gwumc.edu/>