

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Policy Briefs Examine the Challenge of Health Center Growth and Medicaid's Role in Strengthening Health Center Capacity

WASHINGTON and NEW YORK – Two new policy research briefs analyze health centers' growth over the past two decades and Medicaid's role in propelling and sustaining that growth. The analyses chronicle federal health center growth initiatives pursued by Republican and Democratic Administrations alike, as well as the 2011 retrenchment in the growth trajectory. The studies also document the relationship between more expansive Medicaid coverage policies for low income adults and more robust health center size, staffing, and patient care capacity.

Community Health Centers: The Challenge of Growing to Meet the Need for Primary Care in Medically Underserved Communities, profiles health centers and the patients they serve, health center financing, and the history of health center growth. It closely examines the recent reduction in both federal appropriations and state trends in health care financing. In addition, the analysis looks ahead to the challenges and opportunities health centers face as the nation prepares for 2014, when the Affordable Care Act will be fully implemented.

Medicaid and Community Health Centers: the Relationship between Coverage for Adults and Primary Care Capacity in Medically Underserved Communities assesses how Medicaid influences health center practice, using a series of measures to compare health center strength in states with and without expanded Medicaid coverage for adults. The measures focus on patient volume and growth, staffing, and overall financial strength. The analysis sheds important light on the implications of broader Medicaid coverage for health centers' ability to build high quality primary care access in all medically underserved communities.

Sara Rosenbaum, J.D., Harold and Jane Hirsh Professor of Health Law and Policy and a study co-author, highlighted the combined implications of the two reports. "Together these two analyses point to the sensitivity of health centers to government investments in health care access. As investments grow, so does health centers' ability to create cost effective primary care homes for their communities."

"Community health centers are the core of the safety net, providing comprehensive high quality, patient-centered care in urban and rural communities across the country," added Julio Bellber, President and CEO of the RCHN Community Health Foundation, which supports the Geiger Gibson/RCHN Community Health Foundation Research Collaborative at George Washington University's School of Public Health and Health Services. "This new research demonstrates that expanded Medicaid coverage, along with restored federal appropriations, is essential to improving access and enhancing health center capacity."

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The analyses are a collaboration between GW's Geiger Gibson Program and the Kaiser Family Foundation's Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured. The Geiger Gibson/RCHN Community Health Foundation Research Collaborative is a multi-faceted academic training and research initiative created in 2007 through a gift from the RCHN Community Health Foundation. Both briefs can be accessed by clicking: http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/departments/healthpolicy/dhp_publications/pub_uploads/dhpPublication_3B043800-5056-9D20-3D5DCAA18AC4BD43.pdf

AND

http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/departments/healthpolicy/dhp_publications/pub_uploads/dhpPublication_3AFD5C1C-5056-9D20-3DCF11B9D34861EB.pdf

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About the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured

The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, a leader in health policy analysis, health journalism and communication, is dedicated to filling the need for trusted, independent information on the major health issues facing our nation and its people. The Foundation is a non-profit private operating foundation, based in Menlo Park, California. The Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured is the main source for the Foundation's work related to the Medicaid and CHIP programs. Begun in 1991, the Commission is the largest operating program of the Foundation and has brought increased analysis and attention to health coverage issues facing the low-income population for over a decade. Through its reports and briefings, the Commission continues to provide up-to-date information on Medicaid and CHIP and assesses options for reform. For more information, visit www.kff.org.

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:

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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/>

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