

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 20, 2020 15:30 EST



### PCHC opens COVID-19 testing site

The Providence Community Health Centers (PCHC) opens a drive-up and walk-up COVID-19 testing site to provide much needed testing for City of Providence residents.

PROVIDENCE, RI – On April 21, 2020, PCHC will open a COVID-19 testing site, located in tents in the parking lot of Robert L. Bailey IV Elementary school, 65 Gordon Street, Providence, RI 02905, which is across the street from its Prairie Avenue clinic. Testing is available Monday through Friday by appointment only. PCHC can accommodate both drive-up and walk-up patients- a first for Rhode Island. PCHC will initially be able to provide 40 test per day and expects to increase capacity.

"Our commitment remains the same as its always been- provide health care to Providence residents" said PCHC President & Chief Executive Officer, Merrill Thomas. Thomas continued "the type of care that's needed in the community right now has changed and we are excited to be able to provide it".

PCHC will first begin by offering testing to its symptomatic patients who have a referral from their primary care provider. "Many of our patients lack the transportation necessary to get to one of the state's other testing sites. It's imperative that we offer testing to those individuals who would otherwise not be able to get tested" said Thomas. PCHC has a unique relationship with its patients, offering culturally appropriate care over 51 years. Continued Thomas, "we know our patients are scared, especially those with immigration issues; it's important that they know we are here for them as we have always been". PCHC provides care to over 60,600 Providence residents and expects that number to increase due to the state's COVID-19 special enrollment periods.

PCHC, the largest community health center in the state, has remained committed to serving its patients during the pandemic by continuing to provide primary care, obstetrics and gynecology services, behavioral health care and emergent dental, optometry and podiatry services to its patients, and is one of the only providers in the state to also extend services to new patients during the crisis.

PCHC Chief Medical Officer Andrew Saal, MD said "we've been able to work with Rhode Island Department of Health, the National Guard and East Side Clinical Laboratory to benefit from their lessons-learned. We are confident we can expand on what they've already accomplished for the state and appreciate their support in helping to obtain the necessary PPE and test kits". PCHC also credits Governor Raimondo and Mayor Elorza for their support in obtaining necessary permissions to block street access, direct traffic and secure the location in order to be able to safely provide the much-needed testing.

"I am proud to work with partners like The Providence Community Health Centers to provide our residents the healthcare they need," said Mayor Jorge O. Elorza. "During such an uncertain time, we are increasing access to care and making it accessible in multiple languages. I encourage any resident that believes they are sick to reach out to their primary care physician and get tested."

PCHC will also be launching a second testing site for Providence's homeless population. In partnership with the State, who will donate 1 rapid test machine, PCHC will be able to test 25 patients per day. The state's homeless population needs extra support in understanding social distancing, what to do if they test positive and they need a safe place to quarantine. Information and education PCHC is well-equipped to provide.

PCHC has already opened a Rapid Assessment Team. The team, housed within a tent behind their Prairie Avenue clinic, provides concentrated in-person assessments for respiratory patients and other infectious testing such as influenza and streptococcal pharyngitis.

In additional efforts to support the community and the economy, PCHC is also waiving copayments for sliding-fee scale non-insured patients for the duration of the pandemic. Non-insureds make up approximately 10% of PCHC's population. A sliding-fee scale discounts low-income patients' out-of-pocket cost. "Being able to support the community by removing any barrier to care is what we do-every dollar matters" said Thomas.

Patients requesting to be tested must meet the CDC-established criteria, must obtain a referral from their primary care provider and make a scheduled appointment prior to going to the testing site or any clinic.

PCHC encourages its existing patients to call their health center for an appointment and for new patients to call 401-444-0404 for assistance.

For the most current information and list of all changes, PCHC recommends visiting their dedicated COVID-19 website at: <https://www.providencechc.org/COVID-19>.

