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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Family Health Centers of San Diego and HHS partner to expand access to monoclonal antibody therapy to treat COVID-19 patients in San Diego

SAN DIEGO, CA (May 3, 2021) -- [Family Health Centers of San Diego \(FHCSO\)](#) in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced today that it has expanded access to monoclonal antibody therapy (mAb) at its facilities in the Central San Diego and South Bay region. The promising treatment has been shown to keep high-risk COVID-19 patients out of the hospital.

If administered within 10 days of onset of symptoms in a person with confirmed COVID-19, the one-time therapy is highly effective in neutralizing the virus and preventing symptoms from worsening. The treatment is administered through intravenous infusion, delivering medication directly into a patient's bloodstream.

"As an organization dedicated to health equity, Family Health Centers of San Diego's COVID-19 response has focused on vulnerable communities from the start, said Fran Butler-Cohen, CEO. All year, we saw testing positivity rates two and three times higher than the County average, highlighting the critical importance of a fair, equitable vaccine distribution plan when the time came. It is both a responsibility and an honor for us to now be able to provide vaccination opportunities from a trustworthy source to our underserved communities."

On March 17, 2021, HHS announced it was investing \$150 million to increase access to mAb therapy for high-risk patients in underserved and disadvantaged communities across the country. HHS, with support from KPMG LLP, is developing new prototype models for expanding access to mAb treatment and leveraging an existing network of health care partners that have the experience and equipment necessary to provide the therapy. FHCSO is among the first groups of health care partners to join this national effort to equitably expand access to monoclonal antibodies and has been a national leader in policy, education, and dissemination of this life-saving therapy.

"Americans continue to test positive for COVID-19 at increasing rates in many areas around the country and the most vulnerable in society are still at great risk of severe hospitalization and even death from this virus," said Dr. Meredith Chuk, the therapeutics distribution lead for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "We encourage high-risk patients who test positive for COVID-19 to seek out monoclonal antibody treatment. We are pleased to partner with leaders in the medical community, like Family Health Centers of San Diego, in this effort especially in underserved communities."

The therapy is the first treatment developed specifically for COVID-19 to be granted emergency use authorization by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Last month, a Phase 3 clinical trial showed that the antibody therapy reduced the risk of hospitalization or death by up to 87% in patients who received the drug intravenously compared to those who received a placebo.

FHCSD has treated more than 200 patients with mAbs and is able to treat 80 patients per week. To be [eligible for treatment](#), patients must meet the EUA definition of “high risk,” have at least one symptom of COVID-19 and a positive test result within the last 10 days. Same-day COVID-19 tests can be performed, followed by a telemedicine visit for evaluation and qualification for therapy. The infusion treatment takes 20 minutes, then patients are monitored for an hour. There is no cost to the patient and treatment is offered regardless of immigration status or health insurance.

FHCSD Locations that are offering mAbs treatments are:

South Bay: Rice Family Health Center
352 L St, Chula Vista, CA 91911

Central: Hillcrest Family Health Center—Annex
4065 3rd Avenue, San Diego, CA 92103

Monoclonal Antibody Treatment Line: (619) 906-5420

About FHCSD: For over 50 years, Family Health Centers of San Diego’s (FHCSD) mission has been to provide caring, affordable, high-quality health care and supportive services to everyone, with a special commitment to uninsured, low-income and medically underserved persons. FHCSD is one of the nation’s ten largest FQHCs, operating 49 sites across the county and providing care to over 215,000 patients each year, of whom 91% are low income and 29% are uninsured.

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