



## PRIMARY CARE REMAINS UNTAPPED AS U.S. STRUGGLES TO ADMINISTER COVID-19 VACCINES

PRESS RELEASE

**WASHINGTON, February 10, 2021**—The Larry A. Green Center, in collaboration with the Primary Care Collaborative (PCC) and 3rd Conversation, today released new data showing that 8 in 10 primary care practices are ready and willing to assist with COVID-19 vaccine distribution, despite ongoing staffing shortages caused or exacerbated by pandemic-related financial issues. With 20% of respondents practicing in rural communities and a vast majority with access to patients with chronic conditions, primary care could be an untapped yet key avenue for reaching vulnerable communities.

This data comes during a critical time when millions of Americans face months-long waits for their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, even as the new administration aims to issue 150 million doses in its first 100 days. As the largest healthcare platform in the United States, primary care has the potential to turbo-charge distribution if resources are put in place to enable practices to join the effort.

Since May 2020, the Larry A. Green Center has collected data from primary care clinicians indicating drastic staffing cuts, closures, and other financial setbacks that could be alleviated with policy changes that better realize the potential for primary care as an essential function of our healthcare system. Unfortunately, the latest data from the Green Center shows this is still not the case, with many practices currently unaware when or if they will receive vaccines. In fact, practices are not only still facing staffing shortages, but 1 in 4 practices is not receiving doses of the vaccine, and more than 1 in 3 are not being included in state and regional vaccine rollout planning.

“With sufficient support to help clinicians with the necessary infrastructure, primary care is ready to meet the administration on the front lines of the effort to promote, educate and administer the vaccine,” said Rebecca Etz, PhD, co-director of The Larry A. Green Center. “Primary care can act as a superhighway to distribute the COVID-19 vaccine; however, all signs continue to show systemic exclusion of the existing primary care infrastructure that vaccinates 46% of the adult population and 72% of the pediatric population every year.”

As primary care continues to face major staffing shortages and closures due to the ongoing pandemic, patient respondents still show a strong affinity for their primary care clinicians. While 67% of patients report difficulty finding information they trust, more than 80% say they trust their primary care clinician. In fact, more than 65% of patients are more willing to speak to their primary care doctor about possible COVID-19 exposure, compared to only 20% of people willing to speak to public health officials.

“Primary care can play a major role in targeting and encouraging their patients to get vaccinated, particularly people with chronic conditions, the elderly, and people who are hesitant to get vaccinated,” said Ann Greiner, President and CEO, Primary Care Collaborative. “Patients trust primary care, and trust is a major factor in our ability to help patients overcome vaccine concerns.”

“The science of innovation adoption tells us that vaccinating the population at scale will necessitate focusing on people who are worried and have questions – which, let’s be honest, is the majority of us,” said Christine Bechtel, co-founder of 3rd Conversation. “When it comes to health questions, the first place patients think to go is their primary care doctor’s office. It will be another tragedy in a long line of missteps if we don’t equip these trusted doctors with the vaccine and resources they need to reach so many individuals in our communities.”

The survey conducted by the Larry A. Green Center is part of an ongoing series looking at the attitudes of primary care clinicians and patients over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. This data set showed an alarming lack of critical

information on vaccine delivery among primary care clinicians, with just over 25% actively communicating with public health and more than 30% reporting no contact with their local health department.

The survey of clinicians was fielded January 15-19, 2021, and received 1,065 responses from clinicians in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. More than 70% of respondents identified their practice as family medicine, 12% as internal medicine, 6% as pediatrics, 3% as geriatrics, and 7% as other.

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***About the Primary Care Collaborative:***

*Founded in 2006, the [Primary Care Collaborative](#) (PCC) is a nonprofit multi-stakeholder membership organization dedicated to advancing an effective and efficient health system built on a strong foundation of primary care and the patient-centered medical home. Representing a broad group of public and private organizations, PCC's mission is to unify and engage diverse stakeholders in promoting policies and sharing best practices that support growth of high-performing primary care and achieve the "Quadruple Aim": better care, better health, lower costs, and greater joy for clinicians and staff in delivery of care.*

***About The Green Center:***

*The Larry A. Green Center for the Advancement of Primary Health Care for the Public Good is a research group founded by Rebecca Etz, PhD at Virginia Commonwealth University and Kurt Stange, MD, PhD at Case Western Reserve University. The Green Center works to reclaim and reconstitute the intellectual foundations of primary care, to advance the science of medicine learned and practiced within layered and competing social frameworks of meaning, and to deliver on a now 50 year old promise: better health and improved health care through a synergistic focus on both humanism and healing. We are nimble, inquisitive, curious, and open. We make personal doctoring and innovation visible.*

***About 3rd Conversation:***

*[3rd Conversation](#) is a national initiative reimagining the future of health care by reinventing the clinician-patient relationship for the modern era. Powered by X4 Health, 3rd Conversation works at both the local and national levels to address health professional burnout, improve patient experience and realize the promise of humanity and connection in our health care system. Funding support is provided by the Morris-Singer Foundation and the New York State Health Foundation.*