



Press Release

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New *WyCo Connect* Program Links People Living in Wyandotte County to Important COVID-19 Community Resources

With vaccine rates lagging and the COVID-19 virus still haunting our community, the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas's Public Health Department (UGPHD) and the Community Health Council of Wyandotte County (CHC) have combined their forces and missions to help slow the spread of the virus in *our* community. Through collaboration and care, they created the *WyCo Connect* initiative to address the critical issues of the community.

This initiative brought on and trained 17 new Community Health Workers (CHWs) directly from historically marginalized communities in Kansas City, Kansas and Wyandotte County. The initiative supports racial and ethnic groups impacted by COVID and various health inequities such as African American, Latinx and Hispanic, refugee, and immigrant communities as well as people living in 66101, 66102, 66104, and 66105 zip codes. *WyCo Connect* will have these CHWs helping in the community until the end of 2022, allowing time for people to receive COVID-related assistance as well as access to the vaccine and the available resources.

WyCo Connect Community Resources

These CHWs are designated to a variety of tasks in an effort to reduce the burden of the virus on Wyandotte County, especially on people from historically oppressed communities. They walk alongside those in the community to assess their needs as well as their access to COVID-19 specific healthcare and resources. CHW tasks include, but are not limited to:

- Educating and connecting individuals from targeted communities on several COVID-19 issues like the vaccine, testing and address personal and communal hesitancies about vaccine and its benefits
- Connecting individuals to **free COVID-19 related resources**, such as:

- COVID-19 testing and vaccines at community locations or delivered to people's homes
- Quarantine housing for people who have been exposed to COVID-19 or who have tested positive.
 - This resource includes meals and cleaning services.
- Food assistance for people who are in quarantine or who have reduced food access due to COVID-19.
- Transportation to access COVID-19 vaccines and testing for anyone who lives in Wyandotte County
 - Free rides to other social services are available to zip codes 66101, 66102, 66104 and 66105. Funding for this resource is provided by Health Forward Foundation.
- Assisting with health navigation like finding a primary doctor or safety-net clinic.
- Receive, interpret, and utilize feedback to address ways the UGPHD and *WyCo Connect* can increase equity in vaccine campaigns and dismantle barriers people may face accessing the vaccine, testing and other COVID related programs and services
- Most importantly, walk alongside those in the community to address their physical, mental, social, and economic needs and access to COVID-19 specific healthcare opportunities and resources

Everyone living in Wyandotte County can access the COVID resources listed for free by calling 3-1-1 (913-573-5311) or by filling out online request forms available at ughealth.info/WycoConnect

Impact of COVID-19 on the community

Throughout the pandemic, COVID-19 rate of positivity and death totals have substantially been higher in Wyandotte County as compared to other local jurisdictions. Wyandotte County has experienced inequalities which have impacted the vaccination rates among communities of color and target populations. The county's vaccination rate has improved significantly through the course of 2021, but at just over 50%, still lags behind the vaccination rate for the U.S. and is not at a level of herd immunity. Lower vaccination rates can be attributed to countless barriers and accessibilities impacting target populations, such as healthcare, language, transportation, income constraints, housing instability, and an overall mistrust of medical and governmental institutions. This is why *WyCo Connect* is focused more heavily on specific communities and zip codes that have faced more of these barriers and health inequities, both during and long before the pandemic.

Find WyCo Connect resources at: ughealth.info/WycoConnect

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To Access WyCo Connect Resources:

Visit: ughealth.info/WycoConnect

Call: 3-1-1 (913-573-5311)

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