

## Letter from the CEO

Dear Cook County Health friends and partners,

This week, President Biden announced that the federal COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) will end on May 11. The PHE has allowed for millions of Americans to get and keep health insurance during the pandemic, provided for free COVID testing and vaccination, and increased reimbursement rates to health care providers for some COVID related care and telehealth services.

We have been under the PHE for more than 3 years. While the expiration of the PHE allows the country to get to a “new normal”, implications for access to care and health equity remain.

We have been working to educate Medicaid members since last year about the impending resumption of redetermination, the process by which members renew their Medicaid coverage each year. All Medicaid recipients should make sure that their mailing address is up-to-date with the State of Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS). Members can update their address with HFS by visiting this [link](#). This will ensure that they receive the necessary redetermination paperwork.

As one of the largest public health systems in this country, CCH is committed to making sure everyone who is eligible for coverage remains covered. For those individuals who are no longer eligible for Medicaid, Cook County Health’s financial counselors are standing by to help find them coverage options.

CCH is dedicated to providing access to COVID vaccination, testing and treatment. We must remember that COVID is still in our communities, causing illness, disability and death. More than 1 million Americans have died as a result of COVID, with Black and Brown communities being disproportionately impacted. Still now, approximately 500 people die from COVID every day in the US.

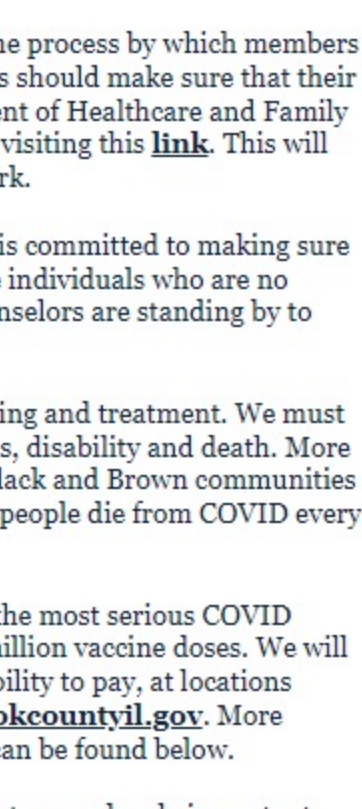
We know that vaccines provide considerable protection against the most serious COVID symptoms. CCH is proud to have administered more than one million vaccine doses. We will continue to offer COVID vaccines for all in need, regardless of ability to pay, at locations across Cook County. Appointments can be made at [vaccine.cookcountyil.gov](#). More information about COVID testing and vaccination at CCH sites can be found below.

Our partnerships with community-based organizations has been tremendously important throughout the pandemic. We are grateful for your continued support and your work to educate your stakeholders and bring resources to the neighborhoods you serve. We will need your help to spread the word about the upcoming redetermination period in Illinois and will share additional details with you soon.

Sincerely,



Israel Rocha, Jr.  
CEO



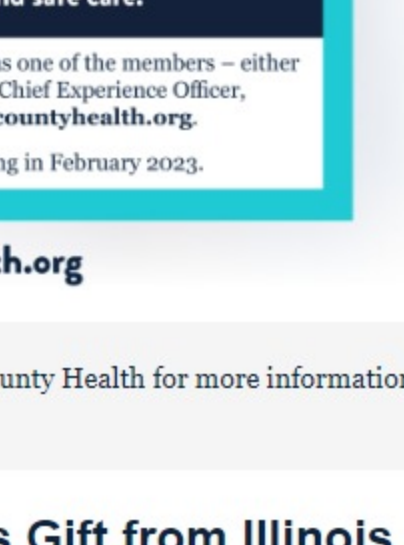
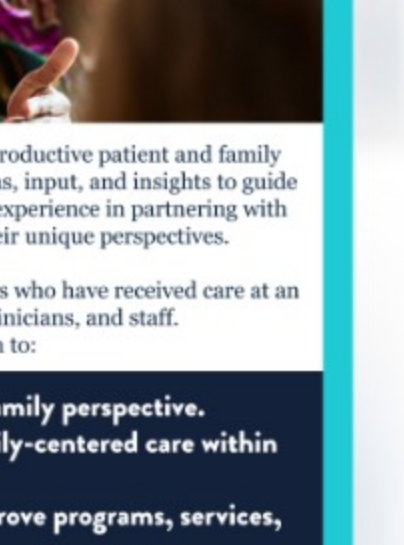
## COVID-19 Testing and Vaccines Information

Cook County Health community health centers continue to provide COVID-19 vaccines to patients and community members.

**Two studies** published last week in the New England Journal of Medicine and the CDC’s MMWR Weekly Report found that the new bivalent vaccines provide significantly improved protection against severe COVID-19 illness than the old monovalent vaccines. The bivalent vaccines also seem to be holding up well against the current COVID-19 strains currently circulating.

People who are 6 months and older and are at least two months from their initial vaccine series or booster are now eligible to get a bivalent booster – which helps protect against newer strains of the COVID-19 virus.

Please share the fliers with your members.



## Join the Provident Hospital Patient & Family Advisory Council



We are launching our

**Patient & Family Advisory Council (PFAC)**

at Provident



What is a PFAC? It is a council of active and productive patient and family who offer a forum for researchers to obtain ideas, input, and insights to guide research projects. PFAC members bring their experience in partnering with health care professionals and sharing their unique perspectives.

A PFAC consists of patients and family members who have received care at an organization and administrators, clinicians, and staff.

It provides a platform to:

- Seek and learn from the patient and family perspective.
- Promote a culture of patient- and family-centered care within an organization.
- Guide and collaborate with CH to improve programs, services, and policies.
- Enhance the delivery of high quality and safe care.

If you are interested in volunteering your time as one of the members – either patient, family or staff, please contact our Chief Experience Officer, Ms. Linh Dang at [linh.dang@cookcountyhealth.org](mailto:linh.dang@cookcountyhealth.org).

Our hope is to conduct our first meeting in February 2023.

cookcountyhealth.org

Contact Linh Dang, Chief Experience Officer, Cook County Health for more information at [linh.dang@cookcountyhealth.org](mailto:linh.dang@cookcountyhealth.org).

## Cook County Health Receives Gift from Illinois Burn Prevention Association

On Wednesday, December 21, Cook County Health recognized the [Illinois Burn Prevention Association](#) (IBPA) for their \$60,000 donation, which was used to purchase skin grafting equipment to help burn and trauma survivors, as well as those undergoing reconstructive procedures.

“We are so grateful to the Illinois Burn Prevention Association for their ongoing partnership on providing support to burn survivors through their philanthropic endeavors. They have my deepest thanks for their generous support of our health systems and our patients,” said Israel Rocha, CEO, Cook County Health.

Cook County Health has one of the oldest comprehensive trauma and burn departments in the country and last year cared for burn patients at more than 2,000 visits across our inpatient unit and outpatient clinic.

“This donation and these tools are going to impact a lot of lives,” said Dr. Stathis Poulakidas, division director of the Cook County Health burn unit. “When people arrive in our burn unit, it’s on the worst day of their lives and they are not sure if they are going to recover. This state-of-the-art equipment will enhance the quality of skin grafts we can perform allowing patients to not only recover but regain a sense of normalcy after a traumatic injury.”

Both of the devices are used as part of the skin grafting process, in which the damaged skin is replaced by the skin from another area, which helps the healing process and minimizes scarring. The equipment will also be used by CCH’s plastic surgery, orthopedics and ENT departments.

The Illinois Burn Prevention Association (IBPA) is a nonprofit organization that raises funds to support burn injury care at Illinois hospital burn units, burn prevention and education programs through the Illinois Fire Safety Alliance (IFSA), and burn survivor support college scholarships through the From Tragedy to Triumph Foundation. Over IBPA’s 26 years of running the annual golf outing, just short of \$2 million has been raised for these causes.

“The Illinois Burn Prevention Association is honored to support Dr. Poulakidas and his team,” said Thomas Tracy, Chairman of the Illinois Burn Prevention Association. “The dedication that these men and women show to their patients in improving outcomes is truly admirable. IBPA looks forward to continuing this support for many years to come.”

## Cook County Health Foundation Seeking Donations to Assist Asylum Seekers

Cook County Health is continuing to provide care for asylum seekers – men, women and children seeking a safe life here. CCH has cared for more than 4,000 asylum seekers. The Chicago Tribune highlighted the work of our staff in a front-page story on Christmas Day. Read the full story [here](#).

The Cook County Health Foundation is collecting donations to make sure the patients we are caring for have basic necessities - like warm coats and boots – to star their new life here. Visit this [link](#) to learn how you can make a difference.

## Celebrating National Blood Donor Month

Did you know that Cook County Health is home to the world’s first blood bank?

The first blood bank was established at Cook County Hospital in 1937 under Dr. Bernard Fantus. Dr. Fantus’ goal was to systematize a way to store blood to be used during surgeries and other emergent cases instead of frantically looking for a donor in real time when blood was needed immediately.

In the first year of operation, the blood bank at Cook County Hospital provided blood for 1,364 transfusions. Today, blood donations are used to help patients in our trauma, emergency and ICU departments, along with cancer, surgery and infusion patients. Cook County Health now uses more than 12,000 units of blood each year.

Dr. Bernard Fantus

January is National Blood Donor Month. There is an emergency blood shortage nationwide. Visit [vitalant.org](http://vitalant.org) to find out you how you can donate and help save a life!

## Commissioner Deer, Team Provide Christmas Cheer to Pediatric Patients

Just before Christmas, President Toni Preckwinkle and Cook County Health CEO Israel Rocha joined Commissioner Dennis Deer’s team as they dropped off hundreds of toys that will be handed out to pediatric patients at Stroger Hospital. Many thanks to Commissioner Deer for the generous donation

## Awards and Recognitions

### Cook County Health Leaders Named to Civic Leadership Academy’s 2023 Cohort

Cook County Health is proud to announce that Kathy Chan, director of policy at CCH, and Dr. Kiran Joshi, senior medical officer, Cook County Department of Public Health, have been named to the 2023 class of Civic Leadership Academy fellows for the University of Chicago Center for Effective Government.

The 2023 cohort, which includes 15 fellows from nonprofit organizations, seven from City of Chicago government, and eight from Cook County government, joins a program that fuels an exchange of ideas across Chicago and Cook County that improves practices and civic outcomes while spurring greater collaboration and innovation across our institutions. Congratulations to them and all who were named.

### Dr. Kalyani Perumal Named to Illinois Kidney Disease Prevention and Education Task Force

Dr. Kalyani Perumal, medical director of dialysis program, was named last month to the Illinois Kidney Disease Prevention and Education Task Force. The goal of the task force is to increase awareness around prevention and treatment of kidney disease, which affects 37 million Americans.

Last year, Cook County Health was proud to open inpatient dialysis treatment at Provident Hospital.

### Dr. Anita Isama Receives 2023 Faculty for Tomorrow Resident Scholarship

Congratulations to Dr. Anita Isama, family and community medicine resident, for being chosen by the Society for the Teachers of Family Medicine for its 2023 Faculty for Tomorrow resident scholarship.

Dr. Isama, who cares for patients at the Englewood Health Center, wrote a compelling essay about making a difference in family medicine.

## Cook County Health Launches Mural Project

Cook County Health, with support from the Cook County Health Foundation, has selected local artists to lead hospital-based community murals projects at three health system sites.

The goal of the project is to build trust and engagement between our health system sites and communities, promote healing, build neighborhood pride, and celebrate local culture. The artists were selected through a rigorous process. Criteria included:

- Demonstration of prior collaborative community engagement
- Artistic excellence through a portfolio review
- Understanding of how to work with materials suitable for a healthcare setting
- Application of one of four proposed central themes, which included Honoring the Past, Transforming the Future; Joyful: Aesthetic of Joy; Healing Community; and Together as One
- An interview with members of the selection committee

The artists and their space include Damon Reed, Provident Hospital; Elli Sebastian, Cook County Health Professional Building; and Lorelei Pement, Blue Island Health Center.

Stay tuned for information about the mural unveilings!

## Cook County Health in the News



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ABC 7 CHICAGO



Suburban Chicago's Information Source



**Daily Herald: Medical officials warn of a growing threat from the COVID-19 'Kraken' variant**

**ABC 7 Chicago: Twice as many people died from opioids than gun violence in 2022, Cook County reports**

**NBC 5 Chicago: Signs of Frostbite to Watch for Amid Dangerous Cold in Chicago Area**

**Lawndale News: Cook County Celebrates 20th Anniversary of Stroger Hospital**

**WBBM Radio: With COVID-19 surge expected, Cook County Health doc shares testing tips**

Cook County Health is hiring!

To learn more about a career with CCH, click here!



Visit our website at [cookcountyhealth.org](http://cookcountyhealth.org)

If you would like to invite a representative from CCH to attend a community event, please send an email to [events@cookcountyhhs.org](mailto:events@cookcountyhhs.org).

To provide feedback on CCH Community News, update your contact information, or unsubscribe, please email Marcelino Garcia, Director of Community Affairs, at [mgarcia6@cookcountyhhs.org](mailto:mgarcia6@cookcountyhhs.org).

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