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Give Yourself and Your Loved Ones a Boost This Holiday Season to Avoid COVID & Flu

‘Boost Up Cook County’ campaign says staying up-to date on vaccinations is key to minimizing winter surge

PALATINE, IL – Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, Commissioner Scott Britton, Cook County Health (CCH) CEO Israel Rocha and Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) Chief Operating Officer Dr. LaMar Hasbrouck held a press conference today to announce the launch of a new COVID and flu vaccination awareness campaign, as well as the recipients of \$8.4 million in Building Healthy Communities (BHC) COVID response, recovery and resiliency grants.

The Boost Up campaign encourages suburban Cook County residents to give the gift of health this holiday season, by staying up-to-date with COVID and flu vaccinations, and taking basic precautions to reduce the spread of these life-threatening viruses. Ads will run throughout suburban Cook County on streaming audio, radio, social media, billboards and buses.

“This message could not come at a better time,” said President Preckwinkle. “With the triple threat of COVID, seasonal flu, and RSV looming, now is the best time to Boost Up, so you have full immunity before gathering with family and friends at Thanksgiving.”

Commissioner Scott Britton said he was excited about the timing of the campaign as well. “With winter on the horizon, and more of us staying indoors, we must remain vigilant about our well-being. Get your double shot of health: a COVID booster and flu vaccine at the same time,” he said. “We are grateful to Cook County Health and the Department of Public Health for ensuring that residents in every corner of the suburbs are vaccinated, including those who have been historically underserved in the northern suburbs.”

“We know that funding opportunities are critical for COVID-19 response, recovery, and resiliency,” said Cook County Health CEO Israel Rocha. “I am proud to say that 52 organizations – including Partners for Our Communities and Center of Concern, who are here with us today – have been awarded \$8.4 million in Building Healthy Communities grant funding to address our communities’ most pressing health needs.”

The availability of funding and [initial request for proposals](#) went out in April 2022. BHC grants have since been awarded to 39 organizations serving suburban Cook County and 13 organizations serving the City of Chicago. To prevent and control the spread of COVID-19, lessen the pandemic’s health, social, and economic impacts, and address COVID-19 health disparities, the BHC initiative will: increase access to resources, programs, and services; support culturally- and linguistically-appropriate education and outreach; augment programs and services for mental health, positive youth development, and healthy food access; and improve worker health and safety through coalition building, outreach and education.

“Throughout the COVID response, we have worked hard to engage, build, and strengthen our relationships with trusted community partners that have their tentacles out in the communities and work directly with residents, including those at high risk, with low vaccination uptake,” said CCDPH COO Dr. LaMar Hasbrouck.

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The press conference was held at Community Resource Center, operated by Partners for our Communities (POC) and Northwest Community Healthcare (NCH) in Palatine. “This location is symbolic of our long-standing partnership with Cook County,” said Karen Baker, NCH Executive Director of Community Services and Advocacy. More than 25 years ago, NCH purchased the Community Resource Center and invited Cook County Health to open an ambulatory site there, to improve access to care for the residents of the northwest suburbs. Because of this partnership, the clinic flourished, serving thousands of residents annually. Eventually, the clinic relocated to a larger building to increase capacity to provide more care.”

“NCH, POC and Cook County continue to work together to address the health and wellness needs of the community,” said POC’s Executive Director Kathy Millin. “Previous CCDPH Suburban Cook County COVID-19 Community Supports Program funding received in 2020 and 2021, allowed POC and NCH to host free testing and vaccination clinics, provide information in multiple languages, and distribute essential cleaning supplies and food to families with COVID. With the BHC funding, we will be partnering with All Saints Food Pantry and again with Northwest Community Healthcare to address food insecurity in northwest suburban Cook County.”

POC’s mission is to educate, support and improve the lives of immigrants and under-resourced individuals and families by providing resources and programs in case management, health and wellness, immigration, workforce development, youth and family engagement and activities, and adult leadership development.

Center of Concern Board President Thomas Merlin described how BHC and previous COVID grant funding have also helped his organization fulfill its mission to enable older adults, people with disabilities and others in need to live with dignity and independence by providing housing solutions, support services, and counseling.

“We are very grateful for our ongoing partnership with CCDPH and look forward to our continued relationship,” said Center of Concern Executive Director John McNabola. “With CCDPH’s support, we have been able to connect many of our vulnerable clients to vaccine appointments, host multiple vaccination and booster events, share current and accurate safety information, and supply more than 3,000 care packages with cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment to community members in need. Our staff and volunteers look forward to promoting the Boost Up Cook County campaign to address health inequities and prevent needless illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths.”

For more information about the:

- Boost Up Cook County campaign and to download communications materials: BoostUpCookCounty.com.
- BHC COVID Initiative webpage listing 39 suburban Cook County grant awards: <https://cookcountypublichealth.org/building-healthy-communities>.
- BHC Behavioral Health Initiative and to apply for between \$250,000 and \$1 million in grants totaling \$14 million to increase mental health, positive youth development, and opioid-involved overdose prevention in suburban Cook County: BHCopencall.com. The deadline to apply is December 7, 2022.

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