



FAMILY HEALTH CENTERS OF SAN DIEGO

FHCSD on the front lines of COVID-19

COVID-19 impacted our organization, patients and staff as only a global pandemic can—it threatened our health and well-being, ushered in a wave of uncertainty and caused widespread economic disruption. At FHCSD, our teams abandoned their daily work to help stop the virus' spread in our community. As we reflect on that period, we realize our strength is always in our people—their zeal to serve, desire to heal and passion to uplift our community. It is important to document FHCSD's journey and efforts as San Diego's largest community health center and safety net provider during the last two years of battling a worldwide pandemic.

COVID-19 Response Highlights:

128,637

tests performed

203,318

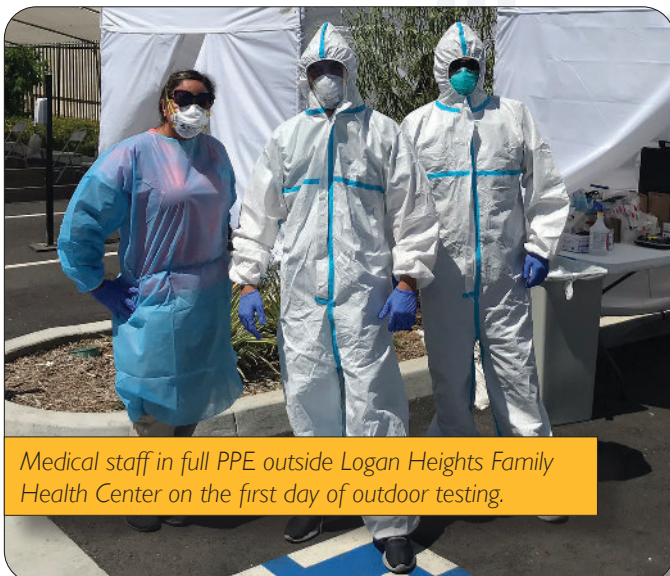
vaccines administered

12,081

antibody treatments



COVID-19 vaccination line wrapped around Logan Heights Family Health Center.



Medical staff in full PPE outside Logan Heights Family Health Center on the first day of outdoor testing.

Facing uncertainty

In February 2020, as COVID-19 cases increased, FHCSD remained attentive to the latest COVID-19 developments and proactively initiated protocols to keep the community and staff protected. Based on federal, state and local guidance, FHCSD teams implemented screening processes, developed educational materials, hired and trained staff in infection control, and, despite doubling our efforts to source PPE, found supply chains were broken. Schools began closing in **March 2020**. FHCSD worked with its Board of Directors to establish an early pandemic response, which would continue to change weekly.



Lisa Duncan explains the supply chain distribution process.

"The leadership team at FHCSO worked quickly to assess the available information about the novel virus to devise strategies to protect patients and staff. We already had strong processes in place to protect against aerosol transmissible diseases, particularly measles and tuberculosis, so we built on those."

- Lisa Duncan, VP of Nursing and Clinical Compliance

Prioritizing the health, safety and well-being of our patients, staff and community

In March 2020, FHCSO's newly established COVID-19 Response Team began meeting each evening. By then, business operations transformed with reorganization of patient service lines and implementation of telemedicine. To keep medical staff informed of the latest updates and frequently changing epidemiology data, Dr. Christian Ramers, FHCSO's Chief of Population Health and internationally-recognized infectious disease specialist, led weekly COVID-19 meetings for over 200 professional staff. Teams were desperate to know how to protect San Diego's communities with early identification and treatment. As part of a robust communication plan, all staff also received a weekly newsletter. This "learn as you go" environment continued for the next two years.

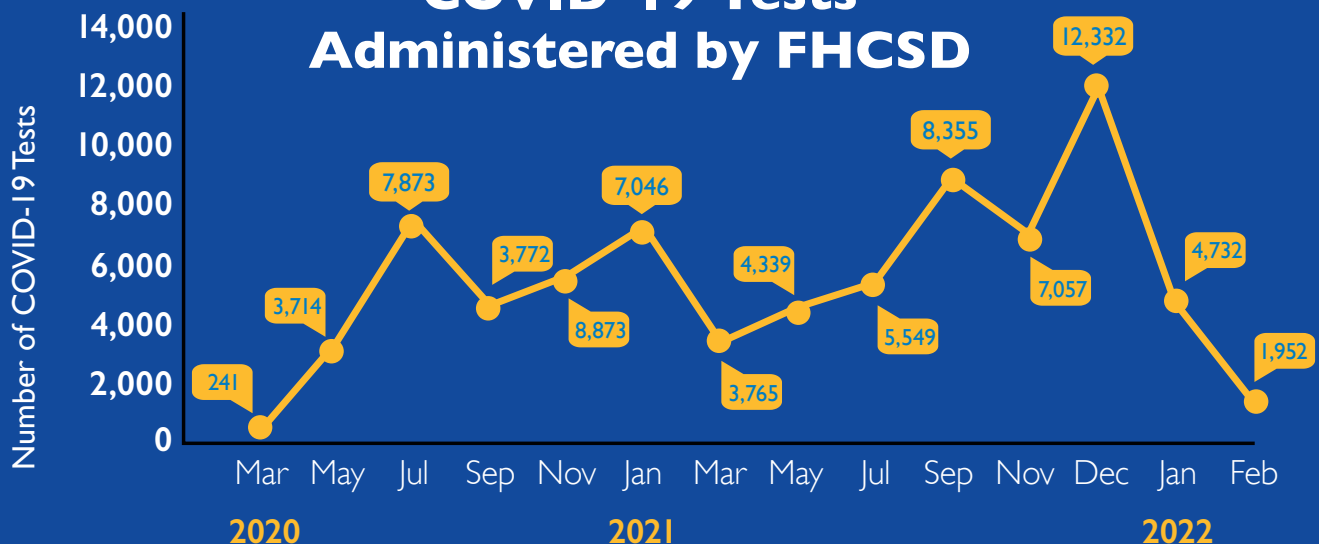


Staff prepare COVID-19 testing.

Establishing and maintaining COVID-19 testing sites

In March 2020, FHCSO began administering COVID-19 tests. Efforts started at the San Diego Convention Center, where 1,500 individuals experiencing homelessness were tested weekly. FHCSO set up pop-up tents throughout San Diego County to administer tests to all eligible community members. Frequently, positivity rates were two to three times the countywide average; the peak rate of positivity was 57%. From March 2020 to February 2022, teams across the organization administered over 128,637 tests to San Diego's most vulnerable populations.

COVID-19 Tests Administered by FHCSO



Workforce impact

By April 2020, with much still unknown about the virus, FHCSD remained dedicated to protecting the community and staff. Staff members who worked in direct patient care had the option of stepping away until they felt safe to resume their roles. As a result, many employees with pre-existing conditions or those caring for elderly or immunocompromised family members left health care. Additionally, FHCSD lost personnel following the CDC's order to close dental clinics for non-emergency procedures. The order led to FHCSD temporarily shutting down eight dental clinics. In total, FHCSD lost 250 staff members or about 15% of the organization's workforce in the early stages of the pandemic.

39% of FHCSD staff were personally impacted by COVID-19. Many staff suffered a loss of household income and experienced shortfalls for rent, mortgage, food and childcare.

"As I reflect on our COVID-19 response and how we mobilized resources to vaccinate staff and those most vulnerable, I am left with a sense of immense gratitude for what our teams accomplished during those very challenging times. I will never forget the desperation as people lined up to be vaccinated, and the faces of relief as adult children saw their elderly parents receiving the vaccine, or the elderly mother smiling at her special needs adult son while holding his hand...there was no better demonstration of our commitment to serve our communities."

- Janet Adamian, Vice President of Clinic Operations

Community partners assist with organization's needs

In 2020, PPE was scarce nationally and locally. In FHCSD's attempts to locate resources and equipment, charitable community organizations and generous residents and volunteers stepped up to help.



Nathaly wears a donated face covering.

Rob Tucker, Managing Partner of Grey Matter Partners, LLC, led an effort to produce cotton face coverings for hundreds of staff members and countless patients. Through Tucker's partnership with the International Rescue Committee, volunteer seamstresses created thousands of cloth masks from donated home sewing machines. FHCSD also fundraised to help purchase commercial sewing machines to support the seamstresses' work. **Norma Diaz**, CEO of Community Health Group, supplied a van and driver to deliver donated fabric and pick-up and deliver the cloth masks to FHCSD clinic staff and patients. During these trying times, community members came together to help each other.

"In the early days of the pandemic Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was scarce, and supply chains were unavailable. When Fran Butler-Cohen reached out and shared she had implemented an action plan to sew and deliver lifesaving masks and needed help – the answer was absolutely! Lending our support to Family Health Centers of San Diego during the pandemic was not only the right thing to do, but it also reminded us all about the importance of being a good neighbor and that each person in the community counts."

- Norma Diaz, CEO of Community Health Group

Andy Ballester, Co-Founder of GoFundMe, helped secure powered air purifying respirators (PAPRs). PAPRs are a standard piece of PPE for health care professionals when treating patients with infectious aerosols. These devices helped keep our urgent care clinic staff, who worked on the front lines when very little was known about viral transmission, protected from the virus throughout the pandemic.

“The PAPR was very effective as respiratory personal protection equipment at our urgent care clinic early in the pandemic, especially when outdoor testing tent capacity and N95 masks were limited.”

- Dr. Harris Niazi, Assistant Medical Director of Urgent Care



The San Diego-based **American Chinese Culture and Education Foundation** provided a generous cash donation and N95 respirators, masks, protective coverall suits, goggles and hand sanitizer they obtained from colleagues in China. The much-needed donation came with perfect timing as we increased our testing efforts.

(Pictured left) FHCSO CEO Fran Butler-Cohen accepts donation from ACCEF.

By May 2020, with support from a grant supplied by **The San Diego Foundation**, FHCSO received food assistance for staff members who experienced financial hardship due to family members who lost their jobs during the early pandemic. FHCSO supplied grocery store gift cards and a weekly food pantry pick-up. The program provided over \$100,000 in grocery assistance!



Ms. Besaw, Child Care Assistant

In October 2020, with schools and daycares closed, FHCSO opened two daycare programs for staff who needed safe places to care for their children. Childcare options included a baby/toddler program and an older kids' program with online learning. The programs helped staff members who experienced difficulty choosing between childcare and work.

“As a single mother of a young elementary school child with special needs, I panicked the moment the public schools closed. The program provided a sense of stability and security at an affordable price. My best memory is when they celebrated her birthday by sharing a simple treat with the class during a time we weren't able to do so with our loved ones.”

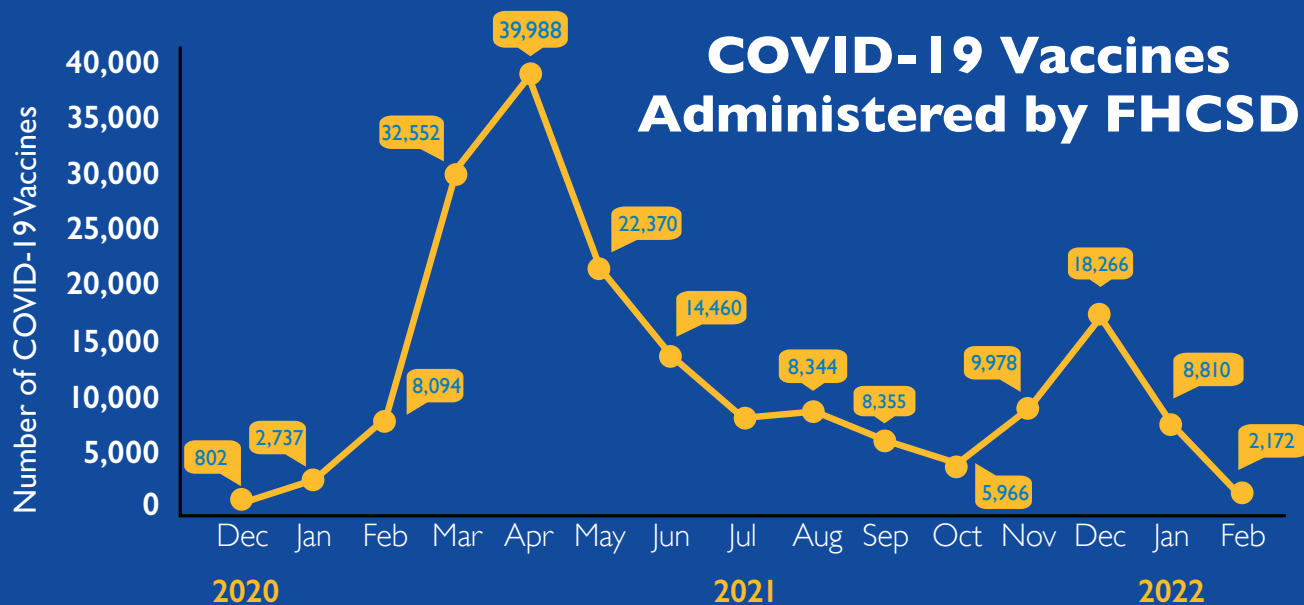
- Michelle Silva, FHCSO Developmental Specialist

Implementing vaccination sites

By December 2020, vaccinations were coming, and FHCSO prioritized them for medical staff and their families. The organization understood that if anyone within a staff member's household contracted COVID-19, it could easily spread to family members and other individuals living under the same roof. From December 2020 to February 2022, FHCSO administered 203,318 vaccines.

“All hands were pulled in from clinics and administrative departments regardless of role. The dedication of our clinic personnel, call center, IT, facilities, patient engagement team, nursing leadership and operations was nothing short of astounding. The need for quick expansion placed an unprecedented demand on human resources, which was instrumental in staffing and onboarding for both COVID-19 testing and vaccination clinics. If we can take on the response to an unrelenting pandemic, there is no limit to what we can accomplish together.”

- Bryan Cochran, Director of Vaccine Response



Throughout 2020 and 2021, FHCSD’s Patient Engagement Department helped coordinate several pop-up events for vaccination. One of our first partners to make these efforts possible was **American Medical Response**. Their teams provided medical personnel and volunteers to support thousands of vaccinations. In addition, pop-up vaccination events were held in collaboration with the **Latino Equity Council**, **Arabic Community Center of San Diego**, **San Diego Refugee Communities Coalition** and **Afghan Community Culture Center**.



Patient Engagement staff on the first day of vaccinations.

“Since the arrival of COVID-19 in our community, my teams have been on the ground, working diligently to combat the pandemic with testing, education and, ultimately, vaccination. With each vaccination, we move one step closer to the end of this pandemic.”

*–Victoriano Diaz,
Associate Director of Patient Engagement*

Getting medical care to homebound patients

In 2020, FHCSD began fundraising for the Tiger Team, a specialized, cross-functional mobile team that serves FHCSD’s most medically complex and hard-to-reach patients and those who were fearful of leaving the safety of their homes. The team provides in-home care for patients with hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol and those ages 50 and older. FHCSD launched this program in **October 2021** with assistance from the City of San Diego and UnitedHealthcare, who contributed \$100,000.

"Karen has anxiety around going outside, and Tiger Team's home visits have helped her where she is more comfortable. She struggles getting bloodwork done and, in the past, had to get poked many times. The MA provided comfort, and there was minimal to no pain during her bloodwork. The Tiger Team is essential to her."

-Wanda Ramirez, Medical Assistant



The Tiger Team provides specialized high-quality health care right to your home.

Vaccination clinics prompt tears of joy and relief to thousands

In **January 2021**, FHCSD provided vaccinations to over 1,000 at-risk community residents each weekend. One community member reached out to say, "My siblings and I have been trying for weeks to make an appointment for our parents to get the COVID-19 vaccine, but hadn't seen any available. I saw an email about the event very early Saturday morning, and I couldn't believe it! No appointments and a walk-in basis! Your staff was amazing and kind, answering all of my questions about vaccination."

Over 72% of the vaccinations administered by FHCSD were distributed to low-income patients and equity communities.

Serving patients who are hardest to reach

The pandemic highlighted racial and ethnic disparities in case rates, hospitalizations and deaths, especially among the Latinx community. In August 2020, the Latinx community make up 62% of cases, 61% of hospitalizations and 45% of deaths in the region, while composing only 34% of the population. However, FHCSD worked to ensure equitable vaccine distribution in San Diego, with over 65% of vaccine recipients at FHCSD identifying as Latinx.

"The pandemic reveals in stark relief the inequities in our society. While wealthier, white-collar workers can easily shelter in place, telecommute and avoid exposure, essential workers must do what they need to do to survive. Until we take steps to address broader societal inequity, the racial and ethnic disparities revealed in COVID-19 data will persist."

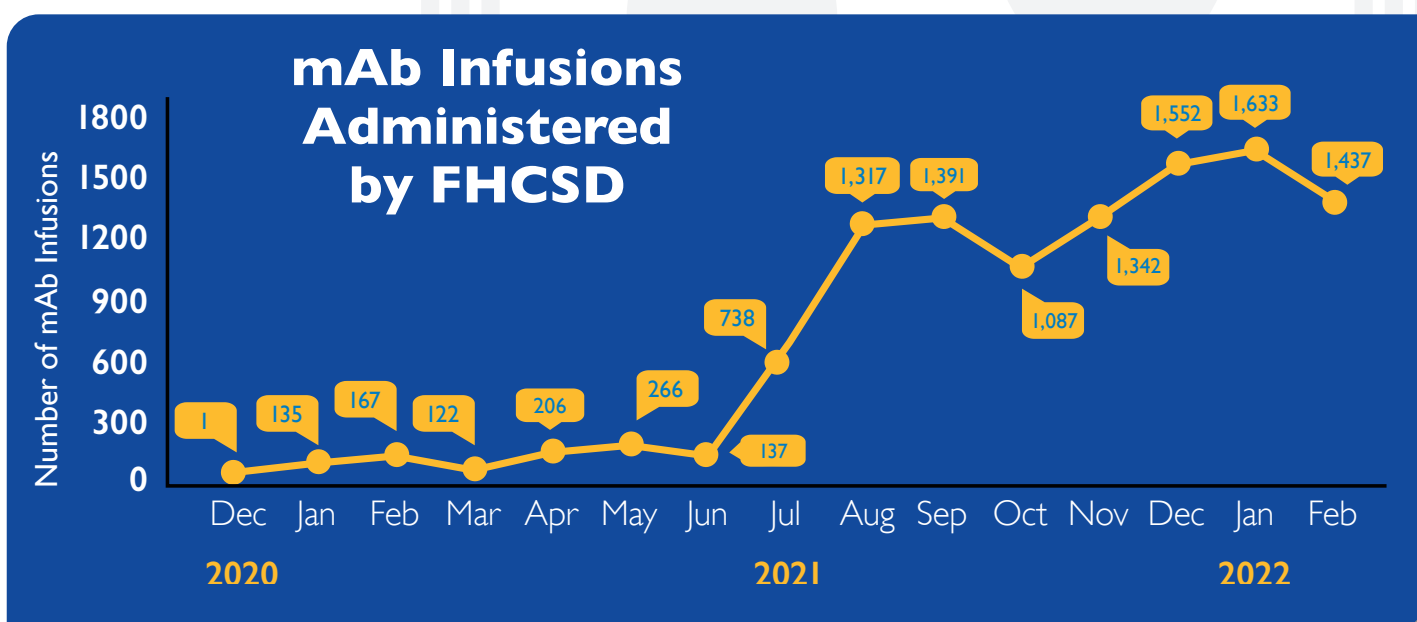
- Dr. Christian Ramers, MD, MPH, FIDSA, AA HIVS, Medical Director of the Laura Rodriguez Institute and Chief of Population Health

"We saw the impact we made in our community by being present with our patients, answering their questions and educating them on how to stay safe amidst a pandemic. With many of our patients lacking access to important education and resources - whether the barrier is language, literacy or even an internet connection - those conversations helped saved lives."

- Raul Silva-Martinez, Patient Engagement Regional Coordinator

Implementing mAbs infusion treatment

In **December 2020**, FHCSO began monoclonal antibody treatment for COVID-19 positive patients. The lifesaving infusion was the first COVID-19 treatment to be granted emergency use authorization by the FDA, and today, FHCSO offers several other treatments, including Molnupiravir, Paxlovid and Remdesivir, as studies suggest matching treatments with specific variants. Treatment is available at two facilities in the Central San Diego and South Bay regions. Eligible 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.



FHCSO's mAb clinics have remained continuously operational since December 2020, responsive to the needs of San Diegans diagnosed with COVID-19.

"I have held many hands of our patients to help get them through the treatments, looked into their eyes filled with fear, uncertainty and regret, cried listening to their stories but also celebrated with them as they felt 'lucky' to receive treatment. All are mere reminders of why I chose to be a nurse."

- Pauline Lucatero, RN, MSN, Director of Nursing

"The sudden emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 presented a unique challenge to FHCSO. The changing recommendations from CDC and CDPH forced us to pivot directions and react quickly. As we are now about to enter the third year of this crisis, we have shown that with the help of our community, FHCSO can withstand a pandemic of this magnitude. We will continue to work together to ensure that we have the research, tools and training needed to guide us through the next set of challenges that the pandemic brings our way."
- Dr. Chris Gordon, Chief Medical Officer

Thank you to the generous business community who supported our local response to a worldwide pandemic.

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The way forward

As the last two years have demonstrated, we can never truly be sure of the future. However, I am confident that Family Health Centers of San Diego's staff will respond with passion, dedication and a drive to make a difference. We will ensure our vulnerable communities have equitable access to lifesaving services, including testing, vaccination and treatment and quality primary and specialty care. These services are critical to ensure minimal disruption to our lives while still protecting the health and safety of our communities. Today, I'm asking you to make a contribution to that goal. For ways you can help, please email richardbu@fhcsd.org or call (619) 515-2370.

- Richard Butcher, Director of Community and Government Relations

Spirit of the Barrio

For more sponsorship information, contact development@fhcsd.org.



Founded in 1970, Family Health Centers of San Diego is dedicated to providing caring, affordable, high-quality health care and supportive services to everyone, with a special commitment to uninsured, low-income and medically underserved persons.

Thank you to our individual donors whose contributions went to the front lines of our COVID-19 response!

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