

# Virology Newsletter

Fall 2021

## **VAX FACTS**

### **Flu**

Whether we like it or not, fall is here. Flu shots are highly recommended. We had a low incidence of influenza cases last year (believed to be the result of mask wearing and social distancing in addition to vaccination). This year, some of the restrictions have been removed. We anticipate an early flu season. Please consider getting your flu shot early this year. Not only will you have some protection against the flu, but this may also save you a COVID test since the symptoms are similar.

### **COVID Boosters and Third Doses**

This information is constantly changing but at the time of the newsletter printing, there are two scenarios for which additional COVID vaccine doses are recommended:

One is for a third dose of Moderna or Pfizer vaccines in those people who have weakened immune systems and may not have had a full response to the traditional two-dose series. For patients living with HIV this has been defined as people who are not taking antiretroviral medications or who have a low CD4 count (<200). No recommendation for an additional dose has been made yet for those who have received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

In those without compromised immune systems (patients living with HIV who are well controlled on therapy), we assume a full immune response after initial vaccination that can decrease with time. In this case, a booster shot is recommended at a certain point (6 months) after the original vaccine series in order to boost your immune response. At this time booster shots are only approved for the following groups and only those who have received the Pfizer vaccine:

1. People aged 65 and older who reside in long-term care setting
2. People aged 50-64 (consider also in those aged 18-49) with underlying medical conditions such as kidney disease, diabetes, cancer, heart conditions, HIV, smoking, among others
3. People aged 18-64 who are increased risk of COVID exposure and transmission because of their occupation

At this time Pfizer is the only vaccine authorized for booster shots. We anticipate additional guidance for the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines soon. Additionally, it's advised that you receive the same brand of vaccine booster or third dose as your original series.

For the most up to date information, please check out the UIHC vaccine information website:

<https://uihc.org/covid-19-vaccine-information>

### **COVID Vaccination Series**

If you have not yet received the initial series of COVID vaccines, we strongly recommend that you do so. Please protect yourself and your family members by getting this vaccine. If you have any lingering questions regarding this vaccination please reach out to Tracy Peters @ 319-335-7605.

## **Where to Get Your Vaccines!**

**Flu**—Our Clinic (Medicine Specialty Clinic located on Level 3, Elevator L of the Pomerantz Family Pavilion) or your local pharmacy

**Pfizer COVID Vaccine**—Level 2 Pomerantz Pharmacy or check with your local pharmacy (bring your vaccine card if seeking 2nd shot)

**Pfizer COVID Booster**—Level 2 Pomerantz Pharmacy (bring COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card and you will need to attest to your immunocompromised status by completing a form) or check with your local pharmacy

**\*\*\*Change from last year: We are no longer spacing COVID shots out from other vaccines. They can be given at the same time as other vaccines.\*\*\***

## **Insurance Happenings**

**Medicare recipients who are case managed at UIHC or are not case managed:**

Medicare clients who are case managed by UIHC or not case managed by any agency should have received a letter about Medicare's annual open enrollment period October 15 to December 7. During this time, you can review the 2022 Medicare prescription drug plans to determine whether your current plan is still the best plan for you next year, or whether you could save money by changing plans.

I can run your comparison and call you with the results. If your current plan is still the least expensive, I'll tell you that over the phone. If we find you can save money, I'll call you to set up a time when we can meet to go over the comparison with you. I will be able to start doing comparisons in early October and will do them on a first come-first served basis. You were mailed two forms regarding this enrollment. One is a release of liability and the other is to create an account to view the Part D comparisons. Please complete the forms and mail them back in the pre-paid envelope.

If you would prefer a face to face meeting, call **Angela at 319-333-8714** or email: [angela-speers@uiowa.edu](mailto:angela-speers@uiowa.edu) to schedule an appointment.

Important note: If you are covered by a Medicare Advantage plan and you receive notice this month that your plan will not be offered in 2021, please call and make an appointment so we can discuss the best option for you moving forward.

## **PrEP**

PrEP is an important tool in the campaign to end the HIV epidemic. Please refer anyone in Iowa that you believe could benefit from PrEP. Iowa TelePrEP can help people with Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance and those who are uninsured get no or very low cost PrEP. We offer telehealth visits at the clients' convenience, and meds delivered to their home. Call or text 319-930-9093, visit our website at [prepiowa.org/teleprep](http://prepiowa.org/teleprep), or ask to talk to Dena in clinic.



### Farewell Claire!

I have so enjoyed working in the HIV clinic on Wednesday mornings with everyone, and am super sad to leave! I had big shoes to fill (ahem, Colleen) and was just starting to get into the stride of things when fate had me moving to Florida. I will miss the teamwork, collaboration and amazing patients. I've learned so much and hope to bring my knowledge to my next role. I truly believe I'm leaving the role in good hands with Megan- she's a rock star! Thank you all for being so welcoming and supportive!

### Goodbye, Katie!

The Ryan White Program at UIHC is sorry to say goodbye to Katie Vodraska, who has moved on to a new job opportunity. Katie enjoyed all the relationships and connections she built with clients during her six years with the program, and we wish her all the best!

### Welcome Megan Davis-De Geus

Greetings! I'm a new psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner. I completed my post masters education in August 2021. I've been a family nurse practitioner since 2009.

I received a BA in biology and environmental studies from St. Olaf College in 2001. Following graduation, I did an Americorp VISTA program working with a local Area Agency on Aging, working as a volunteer coordinator. I returned to Iowa in 2003, to attend a second degree nursing program at the U of Iowa. In 2004 I graduated from nursing school and began working as a nurse on 6JC, an inpatient neuroscience unit at UIHC. I worked as a nurse for 4 years before returning to the family nurse practitioner program at the U of Iowa. After graduation from NP school, I worked for the U of Iowa College of Nursing, with the faculty practice for a brief year. I previously worked with the UIHC ortho-spine team from May of 2011 until December 2020, doing both inpatient and outpatient adult spine care. Most recently I worked with the telemedicine service while completing my post masters degree.

I strive to provide excellent coordination of care to improve our patient outcomes. I admit I have a lot to learn, but look forward to my journey as a psych-mental health nurse practitioner. Outside of work I enjoy most any outdoor activity including jogging, swimming, biking, cross country skiing, chasing my two young kids and reading when I can.

### ADAP recipients

ADAP's annual open enrollment period is coming up. During this time, the Iowa Department of Public Health and its legal advisory plans to determine whether the current ADAP plan is still the best plan for you next year, or whether it would be beneficial to make a change.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns please feel free to call the field benefits specialist, Angela Speers, at 319-333-8714 or email [angela-speers@uiowa.edu](mailto:angela-speers@uiowa.edu). She will be happy to help answer questions and works closely with your case manager to ensure your insurance needs are being covered. I look forward to connecting with each of you in the coming months as we proceed with ADAP open enrollment.

#### Medica Premium Refund Letter:

We have received notice that clients who were on Medica in 2018 or 2019 have received letters about a premium refund for the plans from those years.

Medica is only able to make a certain amount of profit on Marketplace plans, and if they make too much they have to pay some of it back to the members for that year. They will be sending checks to all members. We do not know how much these checks will be, but because ADAP paid these premiums the check should be signed over to ADAP.

If you received a letter/check please sign the back of the check and write "for deposit by NuCara pharmacy only" and then give it to your case manager. If you have any questions please contact your case manager or **field benefits specialist Angela Speers at 319-333-8714.**

**The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** is designed to assist low-income families with meeting the cost of home heating. Individuals/Families must meet income eligibility requirements to receive assistance through this program. Applications will be accepted on a first come/ first serve basis at your local Community Action Agency. Disabled and Elderly households can start to apply on October 1st, 2021. You may also apply on October 1, 2021 if you have a disconnection notice or your service is currently disconnected. All other eligible households may submit applications from November 1, 2021. You may be asked to provide documentation of three months' worth of income, your social security card, and copies of your heating/electric bills to accompany your application. Agencies may not be accepting in-person applications due to COVID-19. Please contact your local agency to determine the best way to complete an application. If you need help locating the agency responsible for LIHEAP in your county, please contact a member of our social work team.

<u>Size of Household</u>	<u>Annual Gross Income</u>
1	\$25,760
2	\$34,840
3	\$43,920
4	\$53,000
5	\$62,080
6	\$71,160
7	\$80,240
8	\$89,320

## Support Group:

Support group is continuing to meet monthly online on the first Wednesday of the month at 4pm. We've discussed topics around relationships, disclosure, and changes in medication among many other topics. We are always welcoming new members, as well as thoughts and ideas people have for support group.

If interested in participating or if you have questions, please contact Daniel Czachura at [daniel-czachura@uiowa.edu](mailto:daniel-czachura@uiowa.edu) or 319-383-3621

## Our Clinic's COVID Vaccine Data

The doctors, PAs and nurses at our clinic are united in recommending the COVID-19 vaccinations as the best way to protect yourself from the COVID-19 virus and its most severe symptoms, especially if you're immunocompromised. As a program, we are tracking of how many of our patients have followed these recommendations because we know that they represent your best chance of avoiding hospitalization or worse.

Currently, 61 percent of our active patients have reported receiving at least one dose of one of the available vaccines, and 55 percent have reported becoming fully vaccinated with two doses of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines, or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson. 34 patients have even reported receiving a third booster dose of the Moderna or Pfizer versions.

We are encouraged by these numbers, but we suspect that there are even more of you out there who have gone to your local pharmacy or primary care provider and become fully vaccinated who haven't said anything yet. And we want to hear from you. Please reach out to tell your provider through MyChart or at your next visit if you've been vaccinated. And, if not, please let them know that you'd like to be. Vaccines are available at the UIHC every weekday from 8:30 AM to 5:30 pm. You don't even need an appointment. And our staff will be happy to help you find them.



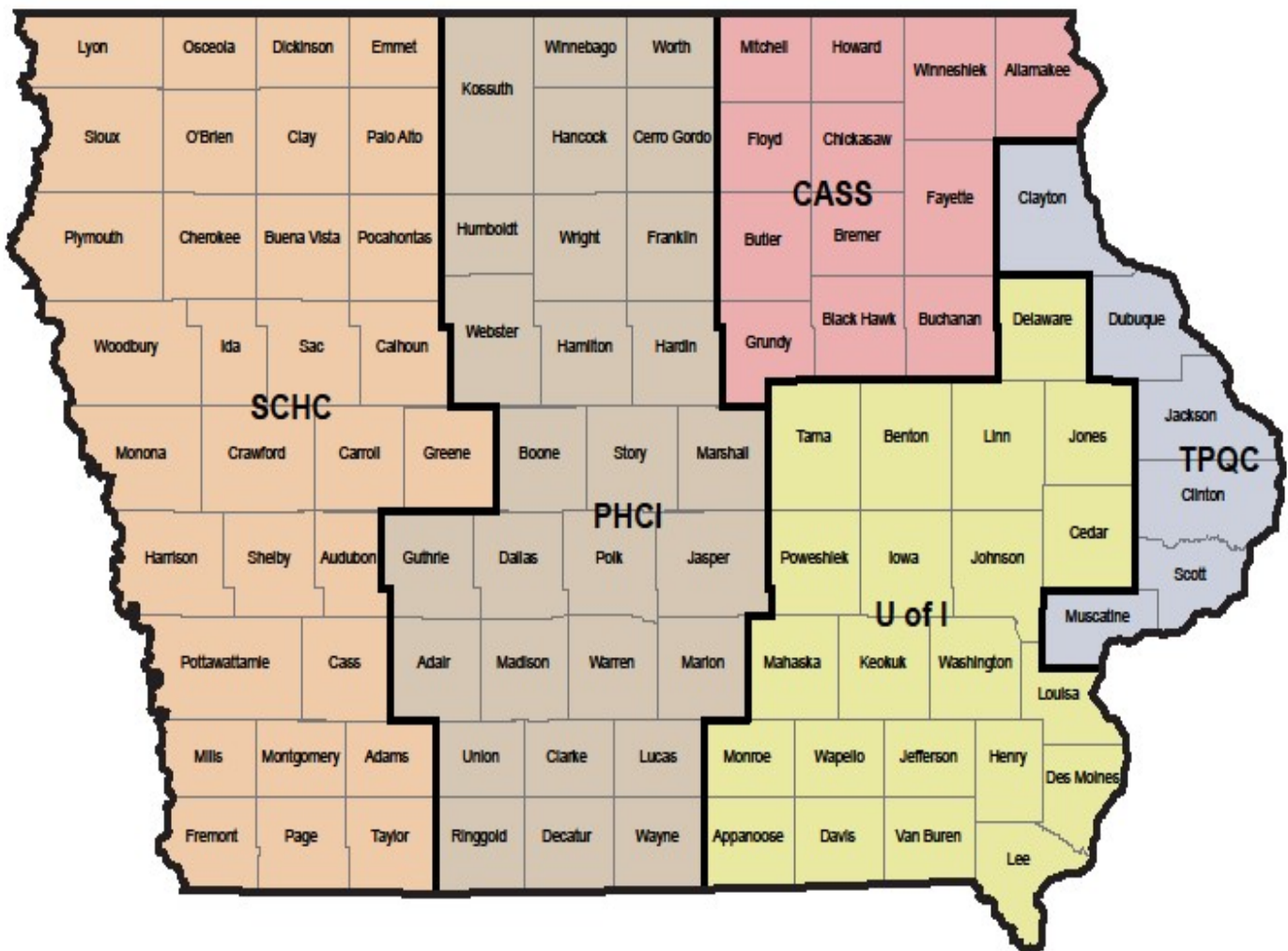


# HOPWA



Having trouble maintaining your housing due to an emergent situation such as job loss or illness? You may be eligible for HOPWA assistance. Please contact the HOPWA provider in your area to see if assistance is available. UIHC currently offers assistance with long-term rental assistance (TBRA), short-term rent, mortgage, and utility assistance (STRMU), and permanent housing placement services (PHP) (deposit and/ or 1st months rent). If you live in the U of I area, contact Jennifer at 319-467-5662.

## Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)



Stouland Community Health Center (SCHC)  
1021 Nebraska Street  
PO Box 5410  
Sioux City, IA 51102  
(712) 252-2477

Primary Health Care, Inc. (PHCI)  
1200 University Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50314  
(515) 248-1517

Cedar AIDS Support System (CASS)  
2101 Kimball Avenue  
Suite 2880  
Waterloo, IA 50704-2880  
(319) 727-2002

University of Iowa (U of I)  
200 Hawkins Drive  
Iowa City, IA 52242  
(319) 467-5662

The Project of the Quad Cities (TPQC)  
1701 River Drive #110  
Moline, IL 61265  
(309) 762-5433

# Iowa 2021 LGBTQ Health Needs Assessment

Hello! Raise your voice and take PRIDE in your health! You are invited to participate in the Iowa 2021 LGBTQ Health Needs Assessment. The Iowa Department of Public Health in consultation with ONE Iowa is gathering information from adults 18 years and older to better understand the physical and mental health status, wellness, and health care experiences of LGBTQ+ Iowans. The data are being collected by the University of Northern Iowa Center for Social & Behavioral Research. The online survey will take about 25 minutes to complete. Compensation for participants who complete the questionnaire includes a \$10 Amazon gift card or entry into a drawing for one of 20, \$100 Visa gift cards! Follow the link below for more information or to participate in the survey (available in Spanish and English):

[lowalgbtgsurvey.link/2021](http://lowalgbtgsurvey.link/2021)

Every person who takes the survey will be helping the IDPH and those that serve the LGBTQ community learn more about how to promote the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ Iowans.



**PITCH Wellness Summit Postponed until  
Spring 2022**

## CONTACT US

- To schedule a clinic appointment at UIHC, call **319-356-8133** and for Cedar Falls Outreach, call **319-356-8133**.
- For lab results or health related questions, please call Tracy Peters, LPN at **319-335-7605** or Amber Phelps, MA at **319-335-7218**.
- For refill requests, have your pharmacy fax a request to **319-356-3004** or contact the Infectious Disease refill line at **319-356-8133**.
- For insurance questions, contact Angela Speers at **319-333-8714**.
- If you have a medical emergency during the 8am-5pm work day, please try contacting Tracy, Amber or your provider. If Tracy, Amber, and your provider are unavailable, you may call the hospital operator at **319-356-1616** and ask for the Infectious Disease doctor on call.
- For medication questions, contact Dena Dillon at **319-541-0335**.
- Sub-contracted Ryan White case management services now offered at Great River Medical Center in W. Burlington at **319-800-5430**, and River Hills Community Health Center in Ottumwa at **319-800-5561**.
- Social work questions and concerns should be directed to:

**Malory Dreaser** at **319-356-1545** or **319-359-9181**

**Viri Estudillo Gil** at **319-353-8951** or **319-930-9829**

**Jennifer Keeler** at **319-467-5662** or **319-499-7963**

**Tricia Kroll** at **319-384-7307** or **319-383-1759**

**Kari Vrban** at **319-467-5655** or **319-471-2123**

**Sade Creach** at **319-335-7444** or **319-331-0031**

If you have questions or would like more information about our HIV program please contact **Amber Phelps** at **319-335-7218**. For budgetary and contractual items, please contact **Rina Chaudhary** at **319-335-7437**