



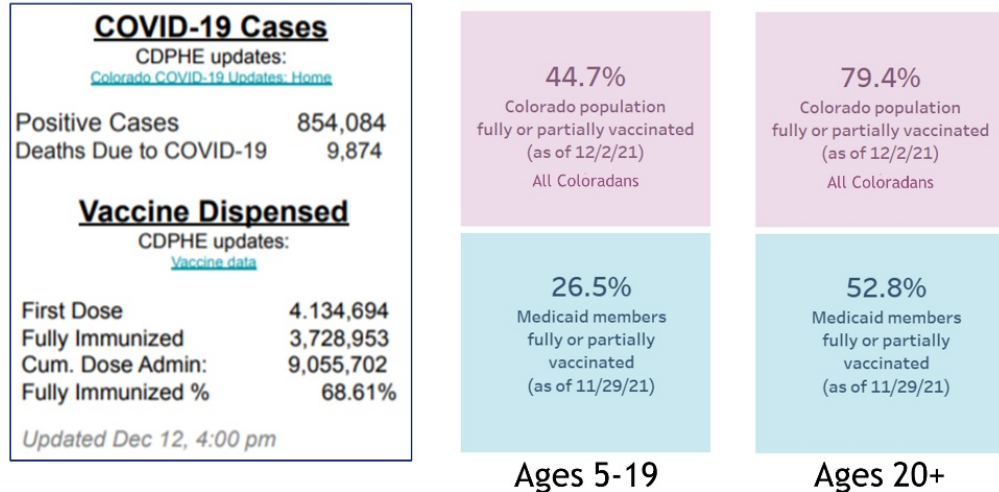
Dear Stakeholders,

Thank you for the contributions that you’ve made to take care of the increasing needs of Coloradans over the last 21 months. A special thank you for taking care of those who qualify for Health First Colorado or Child Health Plan *Plus* (CHP+). You’ve stepped up through a very difficult environment to care for your patients during the COVID-19 pandemic, and we are deeply appreciative of your passion to serve.

As we approach another holiday season, we are in yet another surge: 1 in 62 Coloradans are contagious. Ten thousand Coloradans have passed away due to COVID-19. Hospital capacity has become a more serious issue than at any other point in the pandemic. Our ICU beds are at 90% capacity or greater, and Colorado has begun implementing [crisis standards of care for staffing](#). Staffing is also a serious challenge across hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, personal care, home care, and our behavioral health providers. Our health care workers remain dedicated but exhausted.

What is particularly devastating is that this surge was preventable: more than 80% of Coloradans hospitalized are unvaccinated. And unlike in the past, our children, young adults, and people under the age of 50 have high case numbers, hospitalizations, and even deaths. Vaccination is the best way to protect ourselves, our children, our communities, and our health care workers. Unfortunately, our members continue to lag behind the state in terms of vaccination rates.

## COVID-19 Vaccination Uptake Disparity 18-26-Point+ Gap Btw Low Income and All Coloradans



Here’s the good news: Coloradans ages 5 and older are eligible to be vaccinated, and all Coloradans ages 16 and older can get boosters.

Given this, we must all do our part before the winter holidays:

- Get our school-aged [kids](#) vaccinated
- Get your employees vaccinated/[boostered](#)
- Outreach every time, every patient, every opportunity to vaccinate/booster
- [Enroll](#) to prescribe/administer [monoclonal antibody therapy](#) to help prevent a patient with COVID-19 from potential hospitalization due to severe illness
- Continue to implement common sense precautions - masks in public, social distancing and staying home when sick

As a partner, we encourage you to help connect Health First Colorado and CHP+ members and their families to information about the vaccine. A [toolkit](#) to assist partners

with outreach is available for your use. The [Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment](#), [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and the [American Academy of Pediatrics' Healthy Children](#) have updated information about the vaccine.

We know that talking to every patient in front of you in every setting works - waiting room, doctor's visit, dental chair, pharmacy pick-up, etc. The easier it is for folks to get vaccinated, the better the chances they'll follow through - a shot in the arm while they're in front of you, easy/flexible hours of vaccine clinics, use of schedulers/nurse advice lines.

We also know that [targeted outreach](#) works. While this is extra work, challenging, and you are tired, please continue to disseminate important public health messaging. You are our trusted messengers on the frontlines with the relationships that allow you to cut through the misinformation and provide the facts about vaccines to your patients. Finally, I want to reiterate that the priority is vaccinating - even if that means wasted doses.

**Thank you for your continued hard work to vaccinate and mask-up to save lives.** Thank you for stepping up once again during this unprecedented chapter to go above and beyond to care for our Health First Colorado and CHP+ members. I appreciate you, and I am so thankful for your service.

On behalf of our passionate staff and the 1.55 million Coloradans who we cover, I want to especially thank you for employing your gifts, talents, and passion to serve Coloradans who seek your valued services every day.

Thank you,

Kim Bimestefer  
Executive Director  
Department of Health Care Policy & Financing

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