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OCCHD, MRC partnered with Diversity Center for COVID-19 vaccinations

Partnership created affirming place for LGBTQ2S+ community to get vaccinated

The Oklahoma City-County Health Department partnered with the Diversity Center on Saturday, May 22 as part of its ongoing effort to make the COVID-19 vaccine accessible to all.

On Saturday, 69 people, including children, were vaccinated at the Diversity Center, 2242 NW 39th St. The event was mainly operated by Oklahoma County-based Medical Reserve Corps volunteers.

OCCHD CEO Dr. Patrick McGough said he's proud that the agency, with MRC's volunteers, was able to create another partnership to help get the COVID-19 vaccine to residents.

"It will take everyone getting vaccinated to get us on the other side of this pandemic and that certainly includes our friends in the LGBTQ community," McGough said. "We want them to feel protected from COVID-19 next month when they go out to participate in the many Pride events planned in the city."

The Diversity Center regularly offers a variety of resources to the LGBTQ2S+ community, such as housing services, HIV testing, behavioral health services and case management.

Diversity Center Founder and CEO Kelley Blair, who uses they/them pronouns, said they were glad that OCCHD was willing to partner with the Diversity Center since their colleagues in other states haven't had the same opportunities.

Blair said the LGBTQ2S+ community has also dealt with being misgendered and disrespected at other COVID-19 vaccination appointments. Blair said they've also heard from residents who shared about leaving vaccination appointments – without getting a COVID-19 vaccination – because of the treatment received.

"The community was very relieved that they could come to our place to get their vaccine," Blair said. "While the vaccine is more widely available, some patients waited two weeks so they could get their shot at our trusted location. They essentially put themselves at risk because they wanted their shot in a place where they felt comfortable."

To make the event more affirming for the LGBTQ2S+ community, OCCHD updated its

consent form to ask, “Sex at birth” and “Gender identity.” This form will be used going forward to make sure all residents feel welcome when getting vaccinated.

Before the clinic started on Saturday, Freedom Oklahoma met with the MRC volunteers to give them a quick training about working with the LGBTQ2s+ community.

The clinic was part of OCCHD’s ongoing neighborhood-centric vaccine effort. Other small, targeted events include partnerships to vaccinate Muslim, Hindu and homebound residents.