



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACTS: Jessica Michan jmichan@legacycommunityhealth.org (713) 364-3221

Barrett White cwhite@legacycommunityhealth.org (713) 416-7309

Telemedicine Use Rises Sharply by Legacy Community Health Patients

New Policies on Masks, Social Distancing, Limits on Non-Patient Visitors Now in Effect

HOUSTON, BEAUMONT (May 12, 2020) – Since mid-March when [Texas Governor Abbott signed a waiver](#) to allow telemedicine for patients covered by state health programs like Medicaid, [Legacy Community Health's](#) telemedicine program has jumped to account for nearly 40% of all appointments through May 1, 2020. Offering telemedicine options to patients, including the creation of the [Virtual Pediatric Clinic](#), has helped keep many patients at home while still having access to their health providers to help flatten the curve of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For Legacy's Behavioral Health service line, virtual appointments account for a total of 14,824 telemedicine/telehealth appointments through May 1, a 91% jump from pre-COVID times.

"Virtual visits have drastically changed the way members of our community receive health care. Whereas before telemedicine was reserved for those with private insurance that approved this option, now anyone can get the care they need from the comfort of their home," said CEO Katy Caldwell, Legacy Community Health. "I hope everyone can see the positive benefits of telemedicine and telehealth."

Legacy began telemedicine/telehealth appointments in mid-March when the Stay Home order was enacted. Telemedicine refers to virtual medical visits with licensed medical providers (such as consulting with a nurse practitioner for a sinus infection), while telehealth refers to virtual visits that provide health services that are not medical (such as a therapy session with a counselor).

With the success of telemedicine and recent announcements from the governor to open various industries across the state, Legacy also recently instituted a policy requiring any person entering Legacy clinics over 10 years old to wear masks. Recommended by the CDC, masks protect staff and vulnerable patients from the COVID-19 pandemic from those who are carrying the virus, sometimes unknowingly. Patients who are not willing to wear a mask, regardless of a lack of COVID symptoms, will be offered two options: a car visit by a health provider or a telemedicine appointment.

"As the dedicated primary health option for many in the community, including many with underlying health conditions who are more vulnerable to COVID-19 than others, we are taking a visible stand in protecting our patients and staff," said Dr. Vian Nguyen, Chief Medical Officer,

Legacy Community Health. The CDC, our physicians, our public health experts and many others agree that wearing masks and social distancing will help save lives.”

Legacy is also requesting that its patients limit the number of family and friends who accompany them to appointments to one or none. These policies reflect what many other health institutions in Houston and around the nation are doing to combat COVID-19. Last month, Legacy announced redesigned operations for sick patients to help ease patients’ anxiety, including [a drive-thru for sick pediatric patients in need of lab testing](#).

To set up an appointment, new or established patients can call **(832) 548-5000** to see a provider. Health providers who speak Spanish or other languages are available.

Legacy also continues to offer adult and pediatric primary care and sick visits, HIV/AIDS care, OB/GYN services, free HIV and pregnancy testing, and virtual social services, health education, and behavioral health services for adults and children. Locations and their hours of operation may change, but are always updated at www.legacycommunityhealth.org.

Legacy accepts most HMOs/PPOs, Medicaid, Medicare and CHIP plans. Legacy also utilizes a sliding scale fee to lower the cost of services for uninsured patients.

###

About Legacy Community Health

Legacy Community Health (Legacy) is a full-service network of community medical clinics offering primary and specialty care to in the Texas Gulf Coast region. Services include adult primary care, pediatrics, dental care, vision services, behavioral health services, OB/GYN and maternity, vaccinations and immunizations, health promotion and community outreach, wellness and nutrition, and comprehensive HIV/AIDS care. With 35 locations across Houston, Baytown, Deer Park, and Beaumont, Legacy is the largest Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in Texas. Legacy has been a United Way-affiliated agency since 1990. To learn more, visit www.legacycommunityhealth.org.