

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Meridian Partners with Aunt Martha's Health and Wellness to Screen 1,000 Residents for COVID-19 in Chicago Heights and Kankakee

Testing to inform national research study to assess impact of COVID-19 on racial minorities and underserved communities

CHICAGO HEIGHTS & KANKAKEE, Ill. (June 11, 2020) – Meridian, a leading provider of government-sponsored managed care services in Illinois, announced today it is partnering with Aunt Martha's Health and Wellness to offer COVID-19 PCR tests (to confirm current COVID-19 infection) and antibody testing (to confirm previous COVID-19 infection) at no cost in the Chicago Heights and Kankakee communities.

Testing will be offered on a first come, first served basis Tuesdays – Fridays 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. CST and Saturdays 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. CST in the following locations:

Aunt Martha's Pediatric Health & Wellness Center

500 Dixie Highway

Chicago Heights, IL 60411

877-692-8686

Kankakee Community Health Center

1777 E. Court Street

Kankakee, IL 60901

877-692-8686

Those who test positive for COVID-19 will receive monitoring kits and a daily call from providers for the first 14 days to provide medical advice and help monitor any progression of symptoms, followed by once-per-week calls for one month.

Communities of Color Disproportionately Impacted by Coronavirus in Illinois

Recent research shows COVID-19 is disproportionately impacting racial minorities and other underserved communities. Nationally, African Americans are dying from the virus at nearly [three times](#) the rate of white Americans, and in Illinois, African Americans accounted for 56% of deaths, while comprising just 30% of the state's population.

“Through this partnership, we hope to increase access to COVID-19 testing; gain a better understanding of the health disparities impacting our local communities; and provide critical data and evidence-based solutions to inform our public health response,” said Karen Brach, plan president and CEO, Meridian in Illinois.

“COVID-19 has changed our world in ways that many of us have neither experienced nor could have imagined. We continue to be passionate advocates for the underserved and vulnerable communities deeply affected by the pandemic in Illinois,” said Raul Garza, President and CEO, Aunt Martha’s Health and Wellness. “Through our integrated care model, we provide quality primary care and behavioral health care to adults and families. Aunt Martha’s is proud to be part of this monumental effort with Meridian, Centene and NMQF to provide testing at no cost to our local communities and contribute to larger research around health disparities.”

A National Research Study to Raise Awareness, Address Health Disparities

The testing initiative is part of a broader research study [announced](#) on June 8 by Meridian’s parent company [Centene](#), a leading multi-national healthcare enterprise, and the [National Minority Quality Forum](#) (NMQF), an independent research and educational organization dedicated to ensuring high-risk racial and ethnic populations receive optimal healthcare. People who are tested will have the opportunity to take part in the study. Together, the organizations will analyze testing data to assess the impact of COVID-19 on racial minorities and underserved populations in Michigan and across the country.

Once testing is complete, Centene and NMQF will convene a team of researchers to analyze and translate survey data, and, based on the findings, provide valuable data and evidence-based solutions to inform the public health response and help reduce healthcare disparities among underserved populations.

About Meridian

Meridian in Illinois and WellCare of Illinois provide government-sponsored managed care services to families, children, seniors and individuals with complex medical needs primarily through Medicaid (MeridianHealth), Medicare Advantage (WellCare), Medicare-Medicaid Alignment Initiative (MeridianComplete) and Medicare Prescription Drug Plans (WellCare) across the state. Meridian and WellCare are wholly owned subsidiaries of Centene Corporation, a leading multi-national healthcare enterprise committed to helping people live healthier lives. For more information about Meridian, please visit www.mhplan.com. For more information about WellCare, please visit www.wellcare.com/illinois.

About Aunt Martha’s Health and Wellness

Aunt Martha’s (www.auntmarthas.org) is a private, not-for-profit agency that serves over 105,000 children and adults each year with more than 35 sites, including 23 community health centers spread across nine counties. The agency’s integrated health home model offers value-based, coordinated services, delivering whole person wellness through the integration of primary and behavioral health care and linkages to additional support services that address social determinants of health. Aunt Martha’s has been continuously accredited by the Joint Commission since 1997.