

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**Contact:** Morgan Rogers, Civic Forum Director, 303-442-0436 x115 or  
Patricia Demchak, Boulder County Public Information Officer, 303-441-3399

**Leaders discuss state of health care, how to improve access**

Forum examined issues affecting individuals, families, children and providers

BOULDER -- Dozens of Boulder County's community leaders in health, human services and government – including several state legislators – gathered on Monday, May 21, to confront an enormous and growing issue facing our population: access to health care.

The Boulder County Human Services Coordinating Council (HSCC) and The Community Foundation's Civic Forum co-sponsored "The Boulder County Forum on Medically Underserved: Improving Health Access and Outcomes" in order to examine local issues affecting people without adequate access to health care – whether because they are uninsured, underinsured or lack the knowledge about best ways to access care.

"The costs of many types of vital health care are astronomical - and for a person with little or no health insurance, paying for even the most basic health care can create an insurmountable financial burden," said Boulder County Commissioner Tom Mayer, who co-hosted the forum. "It is a sad state of affairs when residents in one of the wealthiest nations in the world can't afford access to basic care."

More than 40 participants representing local government, the state legislature, local hospitals and community health clinics, non-profit organizations and private business attended. The forum featured two panels, as well as group discussions, roundtable discussions and brainstorming.

During the first panel, service providers discussed the challenges facing the health care system, how this affects the greater community and what needs to change in order to improve care and access to care. Although participants agreed on many shared issues, some themes surfaced repeatedly: the importance of preventative care, provision of specialty care, managing chronic illnesses and community health education.

During the second panel, state legislators and policy makers discussed current opportunities and efforts to promote better access to health care. Senator Joan Fitz-Gerald and Representatives Paul Weissmann, Claire Levy, Jack Pommer and Dianne Primavera spoke about current legislative efforts and budgetary concerns. Policy perspectives were also provided by Barbara Yondorf, a representative of the Rose Community Foundation and member of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Health Care Reform; Jeff Bontrager, of the Colorado Health Institute; Dr. Gary VanderArk, of the Colorado Coalition on Medically Underserved; and Robin Baker, of the Bell Policy Center.

Over lunch, representatives of the diverse disciplines formed mingled roundtable discussion groups to what changes and initiatives are possible to implement locally – and how.

The Civic Forum and the HSCC will coordinate all of the groups' input, suggestions and recommendations and will suggest a follow-up plan of action in June.

The Civic Forum is a program of the Community Foundation Serving Boulder County. For more information about the event or the Civic Forum, visit [www.bococivicforum.org](http://www.bococivicforum.org).

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