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First Colorado Access to Care Index Released

DENVER – March 19, 2015 – The Colorado Health Institute and the Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved today released the Colorado [Access to Care Index](#), a first-ever measurement of whether Coloradans are able to get the health care they need when they need it.

The index is based on 30 data points divided into three components measuring:

- **Potential Access:** Whether Coloradans have adequate insurance coverage and enough local providers.
- **Barriers to Care:** The obstacles that make it difficult for Coloradans to get health care, even if they have insurance.
- **Realized Access:** Whether Coloradans are getting more preventive care and using fewer potentially avoidable hospitalizations and emergency department visits, an indication of increased access to adequate care.

Colorado's overall score on this inaugural index is 7.7 of 10. The score for potential access is 7.4. The score for barriers to care is 8.9. And the score for realized access is 6.8. This suggests that many Coloradans get the care they need, but that there is plenty of room for improvement.

In addition to the statewide score, there are scores for each of the state's 21 Health Statistics Regions as well as scores based on race and ethnicity as well as income.

Hispanic and black Coloradans trail white Coloradans on almost every measure of access to care. And rural areas lag behind urban areas.

Creating the Colorado Health Access Index reflects the fact that while more Coloradans have health insurance, the result of health reform efforts, it will be important to understand whether that translates to obtaining health care.

"Health policy discussions are moving from counting how many people have coverage to understanding whether people are getting the care they need," said Jeff Bontrager, the Colorado Health Institute's director of research on coverage and access. "We are progressing from tracking a process to measuring an outcome."

"The first step in improving access to care in Colorado is understanding the current situation, which we've never been able to do in any comprehensive way before," said Aubrey Hill, the Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved's director of health systems change. "This index will be an important tool for informing community conversations and driving more focused action."

The index is designed to help communities across Colorado better understand and address the challenge of providing adequate health care.

About the Colorado Health Institute

The Colorado Health Institute is a trusted source of independent and objective health information, data and analysis for the state's health care leaders. We are a nonpartisan and nonprofit health policy research organization funded by the Caring for Colorado Foundation, Rose Community Foundation, The Colorado Trust and the Colorado Health Foundation.

About the Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved

CCMU has always worked in collaboration with health care providers, policy and decision makers, industry experts, advocates, and individuals in communities across Colorado. It is our mission to create opportunities and eliminate barriers to good health for Coloradans who are medically underserved. Our perspective on bringing health care to all Coloradans spans from local, on-the-ground involvement within communities to high-level strategic talks with policymakers. We share with state leaders the needs of the people, and we share with community leaders our knowledge about how to work within the system to get things done.