



*Two of KentuckyCare's clinical staff members, who are continuing to assist in recovery efforts by providing healthcare outreach using mobile medical units, education and screening events in rural Kentucky.*

with the costs of recovery from the devastating tornadoes. The fund allocated more than \$2.8 million of the \$6.1 million to Mayfield.

COVID-19 positivity rates are also slowly increasing in Kentucky, due to the number of unvaccinated persons, an increase in the number of known variants and crowded living situations. The need to reach more people, especially in rural areas, with testing and vaccination is clear. Yet challenges in healthcare access in western Kentucky remain—critically important because Kentucky's vaccination rates are below the national average. Statewide, the number of eligible, fully vaccinated people remains at 57%, lower than the national average of 67%.

## **International Medical Corps Response**

Following the tornadoes, International Medical Corps immediately mobilized an emergency team to support response and recovery efforts. We have partnered with KentuckyCare, a community-based healthcare provider, to support response efforts in rural western Kentucky, including in Mayfield and surrounding communities. KentuckyCare is part of the broader ARcare health network, which delivers comprehensive primary care, urgent care, vaccination and mental health services through multiple locations across the South and Midwest. With the support of International Medical Corps, KentuckyCare has been able to increase its capacity to meet the evolving needs of patients affected by the storm.

Before the tornadoes struck the area, access to healthcare already was a challenge for many residents, primarily due to financial constraints and limited transportation. After the storms, International Medical Corps teams worked to ensure that health services remained available, and that the KentuckyCare team was able to increase capacity to address future needs—including opening a second clinic in the community.

## **FAST FACTS**

- Last December 10–11, a series of tornadoes swept through the midwestern United States.
- 52 tornadoes were reported in Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio.
- In Kentucky alone, nearly 90 deaths were reported and nearly 1,000 persons were displaced.
- To support survivors, International Medical Corps' partner KentuckyCare has provided more than 2,000 primary and mental health care consultations and expanded its telehealth services.

From late in the evening on December 10 through the morning of December 11, 2021, a series of severe tornadoes tore through the midwestern United States. The storm ravaged a path more than 250 miles long, devastating counties throughout the Midwest, especially in Kentucky. One of the hardest-hit communities was Mayfield, Kentucky, where the collapse of a large candle factory and the resulting deaths marked the most devastating tornado event in the state's history. In Mayfield, more than six months after the tornadoes, many families are still unable to return to their homes.

During an update on May 12, Governor Andy Beshear announced that \$6.1 million will be distributed in the third round of awards from the West Kentucky State Aid Funding for Emergencies (SAFE) fund. The assistance announced will go to seven western Kentucky cities, counties and utilities to help

Since December, International Medical Corps and KentuckyCare have:

- Deployed teams—including clinic nurses, insurance advisors, lab coordinators and referral specialists—to the epicenter of the affected area, ensuring that people are able to get the care they need. The team, which includes 14 medical and health professionals, has provided some 2,000 patient consultations, including more than 1,600 primary care visits, along with COVID-19 testing and vaccinations, mental health visits and specialty referrals.
- Established new telehealth capacity—including installing IT equipment at state park shelters and housing sites—to help reach patients displaced by the storms. To date, teams have conducted almost 200 telehealth mental health visits, accounting for 10% of overall consultations.
- Procured and distributed medical supplies and equipment to bring clinics back online. International Medical Corps is also working with KentuckyCare to secure a patient transport vehicle that is wheelchair-accessible, to help clients travel to and from the clinic. This will help ensure continuity of care for patients with chronic diseases, such as hypertension and diabetes, as well as essential preventative care.
- Deployed a mobile medical unit to conduct COVID testing and vaccination clinics.
- Participated in health-screening events designed to ensure that residents have the knowledge and tools needed to monitor blood pressure and blood glucose levels—critical to chronic disease management. The distribution of supplies and education efforts will help patients support their ongoing healthcare needs, and ensure that they are better prepared to self-monitor their diseases in their homes if future disasters limit access to clinics.

Moving forward, International Medical Corps and KentuckyCare will continue to increase access to health services for families affected by these storms and their aftermath. With people displaced by the tornadoes being moved out of temporary emergency housing and into semi-permanent accommodations, the demand for care may change at KentuckyCare's various clinic locations. International Medical Corps will remain flexible to continue to help meet these families' most pressing needs.