



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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COUNTY IMPROVES ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE FOR THOUSANDS *More Low-Income, Uninsured Residents to Benefit from New Program*

The San Diego County HHS ([Health and Human Services Agency](#)) is expanding healthcare coverage for thousands of low-income, uninsured, legal state residents thanks to new federal funds.

About 3,000 patients 21-64 years of age with diabetes and/or hypertension will be able to participate in HHS's Health Care Coverage Initiative, a new chronic disease management program that will address the dependence on emergency room visits for primary care purposes or untreated conditions.

The program goes to the County Board of Supervisors for approval Tuesday, October 16, 2007.

"This is great news all around. Patients will have improved access to care, emergency rooms will have less pressure and clinics and hospitals will benefit as well," said Ron Roberts, Chairman of the County Board of Supervisors. "This initiative will improve quality of care for patients accessing services through the county's healthcare safety net providers."

Using a comprehensive approach, the new program targets low-income adults (up to 200% of the federal poverty level) who meet citizenship, residency, and other eligibility criteria. To qualify for the program, patients cannot be enrolled in the County Medical Services, Medi-Cal, Healthy Families, or Access for Infants and Mothers programs.

Funding for the Health Care Coverage Initiative comes from the federal government, which will provide about \$44.9 million over the next three years.

"This is a real boon to San Diego County's healthcare safety net," said Jean Shepard, Director, HHS. "Thanks to the collaboration of our hospitals, community clinics, physicians and other healthcare stakeholders, including consumer advocates, we are in a better position to serve the needs of low-income and uninsured residents."

The Health Care Coverage Initiative builds on the recommendations of the Board-commissioned Healthcare Safety Net study, which consisted of months of town hall meetings and discussions with local stakeholders to determine the most critical health needs of County residents.

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