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## Merced's Golden Valley Health Center gets \$1.2 million from stimulus

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As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, two Merced County community health clinics will receive funds to help treat underserved patients.

Golden Valley Health Center, based in Merced but with clinics in both Merced and Stanislaus counties, will be getting \$1,186,670 in funds.

"We have such a tremendous need, this will really help," said Michael Sullivan, chief executive for Golden Valley. Sullivan said that community health centers across the nation got a total of about \$2 billion.

Although the clinics were given only a short time to submit paperwork for the money, Sullivan said his staff got it together and turned around the request in record time.

"We were given an eight-day turnaround time," Sullivan said. "We got the application about three weeks ago."

At Golden Valley's clinics, about 35 percent of the patients who use the clinics have no insurance, Sullivan said. The money from the government will be used to help those people get health care.

The money will be used to fund 42 new jobs, 43,000 new patient visits, eight new clinicians, added access for homeless and migrant/seasonal workers, expansion of the women's health care program and two new registered nurses, among others.

One of the most important programs the money will be spent on is to help the newly uninsured, Sullivan said.

"We have a whole lot of people who are suddenly not working," Sullivan said. "And they have no health insurance." Sullivan said some of the money will be used to educate people about Golden Valley. The clinics have a sliding pay scale, and the uninsured pay according to their ability.

"We don't want the unemployed to end up in the emergency room," Sullivan said. "That's not good for anyone."

Livingston Medical Clinic is also receiving funds from the stimulus package, to the tune of \$219,551.

Cora Gonzales, deputy chief executive for the community-run clinic, said that with a large population of both uninsured and patients on Medi-Cal, the money will be put to good use.

"We will use this money to expand services, to increase access for the community," Gonzales said. Part of the money will be used to recruit a full-time doctor and support staff for that doctor, she said.

"It's so hard for us to recruit physicians to this area, this money will really help," Gonzales said. "We wouldn't have been able to do without this money."

Sullivan said that the money will enable Golden Valley clinics to do a lot of good things.

"This is really a stimulus for both Golden Valley and for our community," Sullivan said.

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