



Central Valley Health Network

As the massive budget deficit casts an ominous shadow over the state, Californians brace themselves for tough times as Governor Schwarzenegger proposes budget cuts to Medi-Cal and some of the state's most vital health care programs that provide critical services to millions of people throughout the state.

Adopting the mantra of "*fiscal responsibility*" to shield himself from taking any real responsibility, the Governor has called for dramatic cuts to funding that supports community clinic grant programs that include, *Expanded Access to Primary Care (EAPC)*, *Seasonal/Agricultural/Migratory Workers (SAMW)*, and *Rural Health Services Development (RHSD)*, all of which provide crucial services to the people of the Central Valley.

The Governor's proposed budget translates to a 15 percent cut (\$4.5 million reduction) to the EAPC program, a 10 percent cut (from \$6.9 million) to the SAMW program, and another 10 percent cut (from \$8.2 million) to the RHSD program. These cuts will directly impact the community health centers that provide crucial health care services through these grant programs and sadly the effects of these cuts will be clearly illustrated in the tens of thousands of patient visits throughout the state that will no longer be covered by these programs.

And as these particular programs are tailored to help meet the specific needs and unique characteristics of regions like the Central Valley, at the end of the day the real cuts cannot be measured by a budget line item but in the quality of life for Valley residents.

There is no doubt that at the end of the budget process many programs that provide critical services and help define the future of California will be casualties of the Governor's budget cuts. However, it is important for our policy-makers to recognize that some services and programs such as those carried out by community health centers are simply services/programs that California cannot afford to cut, as they not only provide cost-effective primary and preventative health care services but also provide tremendous cost savings to the state and counties they operate in.

Interestingly enough, these budget cuts, which sends a crippling blow to the work being done by community health centers, comes at a time when the Governor is looking for support for health care reform legislation that he has negotiated with Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez.

It is difficult to reconcile the actions of the Governor's budget cuts to the rhetoric his administration often uses when stressing the importance of passing health care reform legislation that will attempt to meet the needs of the 6.7 million uninsured individuals in the state, when at the same time his budget proposal cuts the very same funds to community health centers that already provide access to valuable health care services to approximately 3.6 million uninsured people in California, which makes up more than 50 percent of the state's uninsured population.

Perhaps during this critical time when the state's fiscal outlook is bleak our policy-makers should take a closer look at investing resources into programs and services, such as those carried out by community health centers, that have a proven track record of providing cost-effective solutions to the state, along with increasing the quality of life and wellness for millions of Californians.

David Quackenbush
Chief Executive Officer
Central Valley Health Network