



PRESS RELEASE

El Dorado County **PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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Healthy People Living in Healthy Communities Throughout El Dorado County

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El Dorado County Awarded Grant to Enhance Access to Healthcare

PLACERVILLE – El Dorado County will soon have additional resources to help residents that have limited access to healthcare. The county was recently notified that it was awarded a \$1.8 million dollar federal grant earmarked for improving access to medical care for individuals, particularly children, who are underinsured or uninsured. The three-year grant project, entitled the El Dorado County Health Access Initiative, is funded through the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) - Bureau of Primary Health Care. The funding request was submitted by the El Dorado County Public Health Department in July 2003 on behalf of the El Dorado County Safety Net Provider Network, a consortium of agencies in the county who have been meeting over the past year.

“The ultimate goal of this project is to improve the health of children in the community and give them a good head start,” said Steve Cox, interim coordinator of the El Dorado County Health Access Initiative. The primary objectives of the project include: 1) Enrolling uninsured/underinsured children in existing public health insurance programs, and developing a program to cover uninsured/underinsured children not eligible for public health insurance, and; 2) Developing a program where local businesses can provide access to healthcare for their uninsured/underinsured employees.

“Right now, there are people in our county who do not have access to a doctor when they are sick,” explained Cox. “Children in urban and rural areas of California have poorer health status due to health risks and poor access to medical care compared to children living in suburban areas. For some families, their only medical care is the hospital emergency room, which impacts everyone, and means

that the cost of care is doubled or tripled. We know that there are families out there who may qualify for existing health insurance programs, such as Healthy Families or Medi-Cal. We want to find these individuals, help them get enrolled if they qualify, and connect them with a regular primary care doctor in the community. We also know that small businesses are having a difficult time providing health insurance for their employees, particularly part-time and seasonal workers. We will be working with these businesses to identify ways to cover their employees.”

Over the next several months, the project will focus on reaching out to families through schools and other community outreach efforts. Businesses will also be contacted. Among the indicators of success that the project hopes to achieve are reduced utilization rates of emergency rooms at local hospitals. The grant includes a strong evaluation component.

The grant project will be administered as a collaborative project of the El Dorado County Safety Net Provider Network. Agencies in the consortium include the El Dorado County Community Health Center, Marshall Medical, Barton Memorial Hospital, Barton Community Clinic, El Dorado County Office of Education, Department of Social Services, Mental Health Department, Department of Community Services, and Public Health Department. The program will build upon the Action Plan previously approved by the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors for Tobacco Settlement monies. It will also compliment funding set aside by the El Dorado County First 5 Commission, and work of First 5 Commissions in Colusa, El Dorado, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba counties, which are collaboratively tackling universal health coverage for children on a regional level.

Notice of the award was given to the Public Health Department on October 10, 2003. El Dorado County was only one of 35 applicants in the nation to win a Healthy Communities Access Program grant award through HRSA. The Public Health Department will serve as the fiscal agent and project manager for the grant. First year funding for the project is in the amount of \$824,750; years two and three are approximately \$577,000 and \$404,000 respectively. The grant period runs retroactively from September 1, 2003 through August 31, 2006. Questions about the El Dorado County Health Access Initiative can be directed to Steve Cox at (530) 621-5370.

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