



P R E S S R E L E A S E

El Dorado County **PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

Gayle Erbe-Hamlin, Director
931 Spring Street, Placerville, CA 95667 (530) 621-6120/ FAX (530) 626-4713

Healthy People Living in Healthy Communities Throughout El Dorado County

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CONTACT:

Margaret Williams

(530) 621-6243

www.co.el-dorado.ca.us/publichealth

Physicians Champion Local Effort to Improve Health Care

ACCEL Initiative Celebrates First Year of Implementation

Two El Dorado County physicians are standing tall behind an ambitious local initiative called ACCEL (Access El Dorado) as it celebrates its one-year anniversary of implementation. ACCEL aims to improve access to health care for El Dorado County residents, particularly children, those on publicly funded health plans, and employees of local businesses. It also has the lofty goal of improving the health care system itself. The initiative, which was formally launched in May 2004, heavily relies on workgroups comprised of staff from various El Dorado County departments, local clinicians, and community and business leaders to move the vision forward.

Gregory Bergner, M.D., and Jonathan Lehrman, M.D., both practicing physicians in El Dorado County, have volunteered their time on ACCEL workgroups over the past year and have recently taken on key leadership roles, including serving as spokespersons for the initiative. Bergner will be focusing on new or better uses of technology to improve patient services; Lehrman will help develop better clinical and agency processes and communications to improve patient services. Both of the doctors have a long history in El Dorado County and extensive connections within the health care and general community.

"I believe deeply in the goals of the ACCEL initiative and the people assembled to accomplish these goals," said Lehrman. "This initiative rekindles my career-long commitment to serve the medically disenfranchised. It is an honor to be asked to champion this cause."

Bergner and Lehrman recently spoke at the one-year anniversary meeting of the ACCEL initiative partners on May 11, 2005. During the meeting, the accomplishments of the initiative were highlighted.

Accomplishments over the past year included: 1) launching an outreach and enrollment campaign that resulted in 1,190 families receiving assistance and 459 children getting enrolled in health coverage plans; 2) forming a Provider Capacity Work Group that is bringing local physicians together to examine ways to better serve the uninsured and Medi-Cal population, and; 3) developing the Business Advisory Committee that is looking at ways to address access to health services for employees of small business in El Dorado County.

Over the next year, ACCEL will move forward with expanded and new efforts, including an effort called Care Connections. “Through Care Connections, we hope to create a system that better supports people in having positive health outcomes,” explained Lehrman. “People most in need, or who have significant barriers to care, will be assisted by outreach workers to find a medical home, keep their doctor’s appointments, and take follow up actions to improve their health. Children ages 0-18 will be the first targeted focus for Care Connections over the next year.”

Another key ACCEL undertaking over the next year will be technology. According to Bergner, improved technology can help health care become less fragmented. “Our hope is that we can create a secure electronic network between health care providers and hospitals so that appropriate information can be shared to better serve patients and assist health care providers in doing their jobs.”

Funding for the ACCEL initiative is provided through multiple funding streams, including Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement, First 5, private foundation and federal grant monies. Approximately \$3 million dollars will be used to support this effort over the next several years.

General oversight and authority for ACCEL is provided through the El Dorado County Safety Net Provider Network. Agencies in the network include Barton Community Clinic, Barton Memorial Hospital, Divide Wellness Center, El Dorado County Community Health Center, El Dorado County Department of Human Services, El Dorado County Mental Health Department, El Dorado County Office of Education, El Dorado County Public Health Department, First 5 El Dorado Children and Families Commission, Job One, Marshall Medical Center, and Shingle Springs Tribal Health. The ACCEL initiative builds upon an Action Plan previously approved by the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors for Tobacco Settlement monies.

For more information about ACCEL visit www.co.el-dorado.ca.us/publichealth/accelfaq.html or call (530) 621-6216.

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