

PRESS RELEASE

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El Dorado County Receives Technology Grant From Blue Shield of California Foundation

Placerville, CA - El Dorado County has been awarded a \$200,000 grant from the Blue Shield of California Foundation to enhance local health information technology efforts. The grant will be used to support the development and implementation of a countywide health information technology system to improve access, patient outcomes, and quality care for the residents of El Dorado County.

"The goal of this grant funded project is for county agencies, hospitals and health care providers to work together to enhance our service to the community through improved and integrated technology," said Gayle Erbe-Hamlin, Director of the El Dorado County Public Health Department. "We are hoping to take health care technology to the next level in our county."

According to Erbe-Hamlin, the grant project has several high level goals, including the ability for health care providers to exchange critical patient clinical information over a secure electronic system. Participating providers would not need to be located in the same office or agency. "Our vision is that patients are more comprehensively and holistically served because their doctors and nurses have the key information they need to make important decisions. Right now, information can be fragmented," said Erbe-Hamlin.

A fundamental principle in the project is informing patients and securing their authorization to participate. Participation will be voluntary. The system will be fully compliant with state and federal privacy protection laws. "Educating patients about what the system can and cannot do for them will be key," said Sandra Dunn, Project Director for the grant. "The biggest benefit for patients is that the system would, for the first time, allow a person to have an integrated electronic health record of their services from various health care providers."

A new countywide electronic health information system would also allow for collection of health surveillance data on a countywide basis so that participating health care providers and county agencies could more quickly identify health problems and disease outbreaks and work to resolve these problems more rapidly.

The Public Health Department is serving as the fiscal agent for the grant on behalf of numerous agencies in El Dorado County who are part of a local initiative called ACCEL (Access El Dorado). ACCEL aims to improve access to, and quality of, care for the underinsured population of El Dorado County. Key partners in the grant project include Marshall Medical Center, Barton Memorial Hospital, the El Dorado County Departments of Public Health and Mental Health, rural and tribal health clinics, and private health care providers.

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"We are very pleased to be part of this collaborative effort with other health care providers and agencies in our county," said Richard Derby, Chief Financial Officer with Barton Healthcare System. "This is an important project that can both enhance the way we do business and also benefit our patients and community."

The Blue Shield of California Foundation is one of the largest health care grant-making organizations in California, awarding \$30 million last year. The Foundation's goals are expanding access to health coverage, ending domestic violence and advancing the use of technology to improve access to quality health care.

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