



Supervisor Wilma Chan

Alameda County Supervisor--District 3

Wilma Chan's Blog: Alameda County Launches Programs to Help Those without Health Insurance

It will surprise no one when I say that in today's economy, many local families are struggling to make ends meet, juggle bills and provide health coverage for themselves. With the number of uninsured in Alameda County rising, we needed a fresh approach to help bridge the gap for Alameda County families going without vital healthcare. A 2009 survey of the local healthcare system revealed that there were few resources to help uninsured families access the many wonderful low-cost and no-cost services in the area, and furthermore, there was no easy way for our diverse population to find health services in a variety of languages.

With this week's launch of ACHealthcare.org, Alameda County families now have an innovative solution to help our communities bridge this gap in access. The website is the first in the country to offer a searchable database of local low-cost and no-cost healthcare. It also allows residents to search by language, location, and specialty services. In this way, low-cost and no-cost health services are entering the digital age.

With 36 percent of Alameda County residents speaking limited English, it was also vital that ACHealthcare.org reflect the range of languages in our county. Now, for example, a mother can search for low-cost primary care for her children in Spanish and a hearing-impaired resident can search a range of low-cost health services in sign language.

Residents need help navigating what can be a labyrinth of health services and programs, and integrating the services of local clinics and low-cost doctors will tighten and strengthen our local social safety net. We hope ACHealthCare.org will serve as a model to other Californian communities looking for a new solution to battle the rising tide of lost coverage and unmet health needs by removing barriers to access.

Additionally, I want to encourage low-income families in Alameda County to turn to HealthPAC as a resource for health services. The County Medically Indigent Services (CMSIP) and Alameda County Excellent (ACE) Program is being rebranded to HealthPAC as part of a movement to make the public and individuals who may have fallen off the healthcare system aware of the multitude of

healthcare resource available to them. HealthPAC will include three populations, HealthPAC Medi-Cal Coverage Expansion (MCE), HealthPAC Health Care Coverage Initiative (HCCI), and HealthPAC County (not eligible for MCE or HCCI and are between 0 and 200% of the Federal Poverty Level).

Since the 2008 recession began, Alameda County has seen a jump of 20% in uninsured family members, children, and seniors. With that number expected to rise, it is vital that we do all we can to link families to health services, and ensure that no residents fall through the cracks. Investing in the health of local families will pay off in the future with a reduction in preventable diseases, a healthier economy, and ultimately, a more healthy and vibrant Alameda County.