

FACTS SPEAK

Community Health Centers – An Effective Model of Care

Since the beginning of the recession, 3.7 million working age Americans have lost their health care coverage and the number of uninsured Californians has topped 1 in 5, or 6.6 million. [LA Times Citation]. In San Mateo County, 14.1% of adults aged 18-64 do not have any form of health insurance (approximately 67,000 adults under the age of 64). This percentage represents an increase of 5% in the past 10 years. [2008 Community Assessment: Health & Quality of Life in San Mateo County] [http://www.plsinfo.org/healthysmc/pdf/2008FullReport_CommunityAssessment.pdf]. Ravenswood Family Health Center, the County's only federally-qualified community health center (FQHC), is a "medical home" to 33% of the population in East Palo Alto and 24% of the residents in Menlo Park. Of these patients, 60% are uninsured and 96% live at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.

For more than 40 years, communities have relied on Community Health Centers (CHCs) like Ravenswood to provide primary medical care and prevention services to the underserved and uninsured. Nationally, Seventeen percent of Americans receive their care at Health Centers [NACHC Citation], and CHC's track record of bringing high quality and cost-effective preventative medicine to the underserved is one thing that our current president, his predecessor, as well as ranking members of congress on both sides of the aisle see eye to eye on [New York Times]. Policy makers and community providers agree: for providing high quality, cost-effective primary (preventative) healthcare, the Community Health Center model works.

Quality of Care: A recent study by the United Health Foundation found that Health Centers compare favorably with national measures of clinical quality and patient satisfaction, and show a strong ability to raise performance levels consistently over time.

Saving Money Through Reduced Hospital Admissions: According to a study conducted by the National Association of Community Health Centers, patients in underserved areas served by Health Centers had 5.8 fewer preventable hospitalizations per 1,000 people over 3 years than those in areas not served by a Health Center[NACHC]. The study also found that if avoidable visits to emergency rooms were redirected to Health Centers, over \$18 billion in annual health care costs could be saved nationally [NACHC].

Cost-Efficiency: For every \$1 the federal government spends on health centers, health centers return \$7 in primary health care [SOURCE]. In the past four years, cost increases at health centers have been at least 20 percent below national increases [BPHC].