



HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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Stanislaus County Health Services Agency Clinics Receive FQHC-LA Designation

The Stanislaus County Health Services Agency is excited to receive the designation of Federally Qualified Health Center – Look Alike (FQHC-LA) status to its primary care and urgent care clinics by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. This approval certifies that the Agency's primary care clinic system meets all current federal and state requirements to operate under this designation. Effective September 20, 2007, these clinics are eligible to receive cost based reimbursement by garnering available federal funding for providing primary health care services to Medi-Cal and Medicare patients.

Under the FQHC-LA designation, HSA's six primary care clinics located throughout the County, and its urgent care clinic located on Scenic Drive, will become the Stanislaus County Community Health Centers. "We've been waiting a long time for this desperately needed financial help", stated Patricia Khanasa, incoming Chair of the Stanislaus County Community Health Centers (CHC) Board, which provides governance to the HSA's FQHC-LA designated clinics. The CHC Board, a federal requirement for FQHC and FQHC-LA clinics, was established in August of 2006, in preparation for the FQHC-LA application. The Board, in partnership with the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors, provides oversight to the community centers' operations and budgets.

The current established reimbursement fee schedule for Medi-Cal and Medicare patients is less than half of what the actual cost is for providing the services by the Health Services Agency. The FQHC-LA designation will allow the Agency to receive reimbursement, which is based on the cost of providing care. This higher reimbursement rate will help the Agency recoup a considerable amount of cost, which will go a long way to reduce its operating deficit, caused mainly by inadequate reimbursements.

"Healthcare access for approximately 16% of the county's population was at stake. Getting the designation was essential to survival of the clinic system," stated Richard Robinson, the County's Chief Executive Officer. Commenting on what the designation will not do to help the agency's financial woes, he stated, "We still are strained financially when it comes to providing additional services like lab and radiology. Low reimbursement rates from the State continue to put pressure on our system," he noted.

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