How Health Care Reform Affects Community Health Centers in Arkansas

When the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act passed in March 2010, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that 32 million more Americans have insurance because of the new health laws. According to many analysts, over half of these people will receive their primary care services at the expanded Community Health Centers (CHCs). Their model of community-based, preventive-focused care has been praised as a solution to rising costs and a shortage of health providers. However, before any of these benefits are realized in Arkansas, reliable funding and broad support are needed across the state.

BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

CHCs benefit racial and ethnic minorities.
- The first community health centers were created in 1965 to address the needs of those affected by racial, ethnic, and economic disparities. Approximately 40% of their current patient populations are uninsured, 70% live in poverty, and over half are ethnic minorities.
- The Community Health Centers of Arkansas served 141,416 patients in 2009.
  o Over a quarter of these patients self-identified as African American, and 11% were Hispanic or Latino.
  o 10,483 of their patients were served in a language other than English.

CHCs benefit rural populations.
- Twelve organizations are operating CHCs at 70 locations across the state, and 18 also offer dental services.
- Currently, 4.4% of Arkansans use community health centers as their primary source of health care.

CHCs receive support from Democrats and Republicans.
- Politicians from both parties frequently promote the community-based model and seek funds for CHCs in their districts.
- When George W. Bush was in office, he signed legislation to double the number of CHCs.
- Even before the health care reform legislation, $2 billion was given to CHCs by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, including a total of $14 million to 13 different sites in Arkansas.

CHCs received new funding in the health reform law.
- The laws give CHCs $11 billion over five years: $1.5 billion for capital projects like building new facilities and $9.5 billion to expand operational capacity, which includes hiring new staff and offering new services.
- Nationwide, CHCs will be able to hire 15,000 more health providers and serve up to 40 million people by 2019—essentially doubling their current capacity and outreach.

CHALLENGES FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

None of the new funding for CHCs is guaranteed.
- The new funding will be distributed through a series of competitive grants. Therefore, while it is possible that many of our CHCs will receive these grants, they may need to seek other sources of funding to meet the needs of new patients.

CHCs will need more staff and more space in order to expand services.
- Money alone is not enough. New facilities will need to be built, and old facilities need to be renovated. New staff members will need to be recruited. Often, because of their low salaries and remote locations, CHCs find it difficult to hire physicians and other health professionals to serve in their clinics.

CAN YOU BENEFIT FROM A COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER?

Call Community Health Centers of Arkansas (1-877-666-2422) or visit their website to find a provider in your area [http://www.chc-ar.org/locations].

Check out our website [www.arminorityhealth.com/] for more detailed about these changes and regular updates about how health reform laws will impact Minority populations in Arkansas.