



The Impact of Health Care Reform Legislation on Volunteers in Medicine Clinics

The recent passage of historic health care reform legislation has raised questions about the ongoing need for Volunteers in Medicine free clinics, as well as the impact of the proposed legislation on existing clinics. We, like the rest of the nation, must learn as much as possible about the details in the legislation to plan effectively for the future. However, at this early stage in the life of health care reform, here is what we do know:

- Much of the legislation will not be implemented until 2014. Between now and then, additional people will join the ranks of the uninsured, as health insurance costs continue to escalate to unsustainable levels, causing individuals, families and businesses to drop coverage.
- States will continue to pare Medicaid enrollees, in response to rising costs and state budget deficits, thereby increasing the number of the uninsured.
- Although 32 million uninsured people will be covered by the legislation, 15 million people will remain uninsured.
- Undocumented residents are excluded from purchasing health insurance coverage.
- The current primary care physician shortage is projected to evolve into a crisis, as fewer physicians choose family medicine over more lucrative sub-specialty practices.

Over the next four years, with growing numbers of uninsured coupled with escalating costs for health insurance and medical care, community safety-net clinics will continue to be in the frontline of assuring access to primary care for those who otherwise would go without. Even after the legislation kicks into high gear in 2014, VIM clinics will continue to care for those who fall through the cracks and remain uninsured, are unable to afford services not covered by their insurance (dental, optometry, etc.), and those who are unable to secure a primary care provider.

We believe community-owned and sustained VIM clinics will be needed indefinitely to continue to care for those who remain uninsured, until such time when everyone in the country has access to quality, affordable health care.

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