

## Colorado's Community Health Centers and Health Care Reform

The new federal health care reform law expands insurance coverage to 32 million people and invests in access and prevention through an expansion of the federally qualified Community Health Center program. The law will also help bring more primary care providers to communities where they are scarce. It will help Community Health Centers strengthen their base to continue to serve the people of Colorado and will help set the stage for future growth under health care reform.

Community Health Centers (CHCs) were singled out for this honor and obligation because of their record of providing high quality, affordable, primary health care to low-income individuals and families in medically underserved areas. The investment made under health care reform will help CHCs continue to offer high quality care in communities they serve and expand into others not yet adequately served.

### Direct Health Center Funding

The health care reform package includes \$11 billion in new funding over five years for the CHC program:

- \$1.5 billion for CHC construction and renovation
- \$9.5 billion to preserve, strengthen and expand capacity as follows:
  - FY2011: \$1 billion
  - FY 2012: \$1.2 billion
  - FY 2013: \$1.5 billion
  - FY 2014: \$2.2 billion
  - FY 2014: \$3.6 billion

Note the federal fiscal year runs from Oct. 1 to Sept. 30 (i.e. FY2011 is Oct. 1, 2010, to Sept. 30, 2011).

The new federal law provides resources for the Community Health Center program to care for nearly 20 million more people across the nation, doubling current capacity and providing 15,000 new jobs in health care.

There are currently hundreds of thousands of people in Colorado without access to the medical, dental and mental health care they need. It is not yet known how much of this new funding will be coming to Colorado to address this need. Much of the funding is expected to be distributed through competitive grants. Colorado CHCs and communities without CHCs will be working to bring as many of these new federal dollars to Colorado as possible.



**Funding for Health Center expansions will help provide care to uninsured families even before changes to insurance laws and Medicaid expansions help more people get insurance.**

Federal Qualified **Community Health Centers** (FQHCs or CHCs) are nonprofit health care providers with a mission to provide comprehensive primary health care to low-income working individuals and families. In Colorado, CHCs are the health care home for more than 500,000 people, including 1/3 of Medicaid enrollees, 1/4 of CHP+ enrollees and 1/3 of our state's low-income uninsured. Fifteen CHCs operate 123 clinic sites across the state, caring for Coloradans in 58 of our state's 64 counties. Each CHC is governed by a patient-majority board and the program has been rated the most successful program of the US Dept. of Health and Human Services.

## Health Care Workers to Shortage Areas

The reform package also provides \$1.5 billion over five years to the National Health Services Corps, a very important partner to the Health Center program, helping bring much needed health care providers to underserved rural and urban areas.

## Coverage Expansions

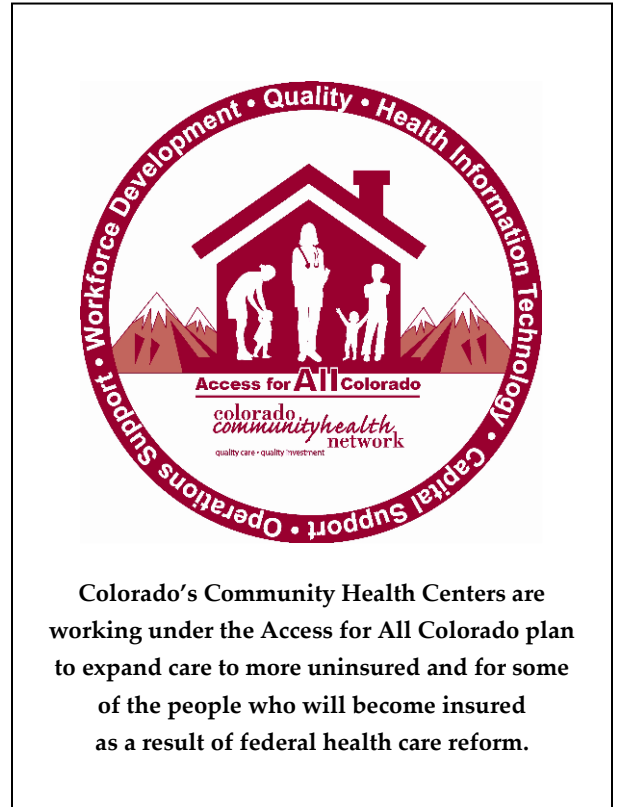
Colorado is leading the way by expanding Medicaid and CHP+ to cover more individuals and families in 2010 and 2012. Beginning in 2014, the federal reform package will expand Medicaid even more, and make it easier for individuals to buy health insurance through changes to insurance law and by providing subsidies to make it more affordable. Health Centers will provide care to people in the meantime, and when more Coloradans become insured.

Even with an insurance card, many families have other barriers to accessing care—transportation, language, reading level, disabilities—and Community Health Centers do a very good job at lowering these barriers. By design, Health Centers are located in areas that don't have enough health care providers. So even when more Americans are able to obtain health insurance, Health Centers will be essential to providing quality primary care around our state.

A plan developed by the Colorado Community Health Network and Colorado CHCs, called Access for All Colorado, shows how increasing funding over the next 20 years will allow CHCs to serve as the health care home to one million Coloradans, approximately half of them now uninsured.

## Next Steps

The increased federal funding for the Health Center program is intended to strengthen and grow the Health Center program, but federal support alone won't address the need in Colorado. Ongoing support of partners such as state and local governments, business, foundations, and individuals will be crucial ensure that all Coloradans have access to high quality primary care.



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The **Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN)** is the membership association for CHCs in Colorado.

For more information about CCHN or Colorado Community Health Centers, contact Policy Director, Polly Anderson: (303) 861-5165, ext. 246, or [polly@cchn.org](mailto:polly@cchn.org).