



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Kathleen Grassi, R.D., M.P.H.
Director

Merced County ACA Readiness Project Abstract

Merced County's Health Care Consortium proposes to increase readiness and collaborative capacity to take advantage of opportunities available through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) implementation. To accomplish this, the *Merced County ACA Readiness Project* will plan for health care coverage expansion; identify opportunities for health care delivery improvements; increase local awareness and advocacy around ACA implementation; and develop an operational plan that identifies timelines and action items to guide local expansion and improvement efforts. Community-wide awareness and advocacy activities will be conducted and will include locally-tailored informational materials; presentations to policy boards, community roundtables and at other appropriate venues; and a community convening to highlight ACA opportunities and challenges of relevance to the Merced community.

The Supreme Court decision and the national and state election outcomes points the way for full implementation of the ACA over the next five years. However, expanded coverage options do not guarantee utilization of health care services and efforts to provide enhanced outreach and enrollment options that are culturally and linguistically useful will be necessary to the success of Medi-Cal expansion. Additionally, coordination of outreach, enrollment, and delivery of health, mental health and public health services will be essential to ACA implementation to ensure that coverage expansion is successful and that the un- and under-insured populations receive the benefits coordinated preventative services through a medical home can offer. Assuring that more local residents can access quality health care will ultimately benefit the overall health status of the Merced County community.

The Consortium is the logical body to begin to build the ACA readiness effort. Current membership includes: Mercy Medical Center; Golden Valley Health Centers; Castle Family Health Centers; Livingston Medical Group; Central California Alliance for Health; and the county Department of Public Health and Human Services Agency. New members to be included are: Merced County Behavioral Health Department; Memorial Hospital Los Banos; Building Healthy Communities; other community based organizations that include health as a part of their mission; and interested community-members who are identified through the BHC or other community-based venues.

Expected outcomes include an increase of awareness and advocacy related to implementation of the ACA's provisions; identification of opportunities, (i.e., coordination of health and mental health services for users of both systems); challenges to full ACA implementation in Merced County, (i.e., Medi-Cal network adequacy, reimbursement structures, etc.); and better collaboration among local health care systems to coordinate health care delivery and to improve health care access and available health care resources.