

Article: **What Can Mountain Health & Community Services Do For You**

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Americans keep hearing about the need for change in our health care system. President Obama is trying to get legislation passed that will expand health care insurance, and meanwhile medical costs are increasing every day. It's all very confusing and many of us aren't sure what we need anymore to take care of our families. But, amid all of this confusion, community health clinics continue to serve as vital health care safety nets in their communities. Mountain Health & Community Services (MHCS) consists of a group of five federally qualified health care centers providing medical care in our own communities.

Federally qualified health care centers continue to grow and the number of patients that they see is increasing each year. Health centers have proven their ability to provide excellent care at a relatively low cost, and both President's Bush and Obama have championed their expansion across the United States. MHCS has seen an increase of 78% in uninsured patients served this past year alone. Many of these patients would be forced to seek care in emergency rooms if there were no community clinics.

Mountain Health and Community Services is committed to bringing more services to the back country over the next few years with the development of a new health clinic. We're intending to expand to include x-ray services and a pharmacy in Campo at the new Mountain Empire Family Medicine clinic. In addition, we know that there is a need for dental service and are hoping to include a dental clinic within the new center also.

"Mountain Health has been an integral part of providing health services to Mountain Empire for many years and we are pleased that the known gaps in services will finally be filled by adding local access to dental and pharmacy," said Judith Shaplin, CEO of MHCS.

At Alpine Family Medicine, it is our goal to bring in additional providers that will allow us to extend hours for primary and urgent care services. Not only are community health centers more cost-effective, but they also work together to help provide patient's access to specialists, which also helps reduce the cost to the patient. A 2001 study of 50,000 Medicaid patients concluded that patients who got most of their care at a community health center were significantly less likely than other patients to be hospitalized or seek emergency room care. Community health centers deliver better continuity of care than private doctors or hospital outpatient clinics, according to a 2000 study in the Journal of American Medical Association. People who use MHCS may not have access to transportation to get to a hospital and their needs are better served by having a primary-care clinic, or a "medical home," in their own neighborhood.

Mountain Health & Community Services is committed to realizing the complete physical, mental and social well-being of each of its patients. To achieve good health within our communities, MHCS offers prevention, early intervention, treatment and education services. MHCS seeks to provide greater ease of access to its services by offering them on a sliding fee scale basis, so those without health insurance, and those with low incomes, can afford care whose cost is based on their ability to pay. MHCS also accepts most insurance plans including Healthy Families and Medi-Cal. Our goal is that our most underserved communities have local access to the health and social services that they need.

For more information or to schedule an appointment you can call Mtn. Empire Family Medicine in Campo at (619) 478-5611, Alpine Family Medicine at (619) 445-6200, or High Desert Family Medicine in Jacumba at (619) 766-4071. H1N1 and Seasonal flu shots are available for everyone at this time. Donations for our uninsured children's fund are gratefully accepted by sending it to: MHCS, 31115 Highway 94, Campo, CA 91906, or you can visit our website at www.mtnhealth.org for upcoming events and to make a donation. MHCS is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit charitable organization.

Watch for more fun things coming up this New Year. 2010 promises to bring some new services and fun events to the Mountain Empire communities. It is our pleasure to serve you and your family this coming year.