



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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HCF/REACH GRANT WILL HELP METRO-AREA SAFETY NET CLINICS SERVE THOUSANDS MORE PATIENTS

KANSAS CITY, MO – A coordinated effort by five safety-net clinics to make after-hours care available around the metropolitan area will provide for an additional 15,000 patient visits a year. The project is being funded with a \$700,000 grant from the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City (HCF) and the REACH Healthcare Foundation and is part of an effort to strengthen safety-net services in the region.

The grant will cover staffing and other expenses to operate the clinics for extended hours on weekdays and weekends, with a goal of beginning expanded hours on October 1. The participating clinics are located throughout the metropolitan area and include Health Partnership Clinic of Johnson County in Overland Park, Kansas; the Southwest Boulevard Family Health Care in Kansas City, Kansas; the Kansas City Free Health Clinic and Swope Health Services in Kansas City, Missouri and the Northland Health Care Access-Crestview Elementary School Clinic in Kansas City's northland area.

"This project marks a major step toward developing a regional system of health care that can meet the needs of low-income and uninsured residents," said Steve Roling, President and CEO of HCF. "Many private medical practices offer extended hours and urgent care, but most safety-net clinics don't have the resources to expand services beyond traditional daytime hours."

Currently many individuals and families needing health care after work or on weekends are forced to use hospital emergency departments for common primary care issues.

"This grant will strengthen the entire safety net system and give people access to care during evenings and weekends so they can continue to work and to care for their families," says Sheridan Wood, Executive Director of the Kansas City Free Health Clinic. "It will save everyone in our community money as we care for patients in the most appropriate primary care setting rather than in the very costly emergency room."

The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), which is coordinating the regional health initiative, estimates that 26% of visits (an estimated 32,188 visits) to metro-area emergency departments by uninsured patients are for health issues that could be handled by a primary care clinic.

“By funding a regional network, we hope to give low-income patients the opportunity to establish a relationship with a primary care provider who can help them manage their health needs so they don’t have to rely on hospital emergency departments for regular care,” said Brenda Sharpe, President and CEO of the REACH Foundation. “That’s an expensive approach to delivering health services, and ultimately doesn’t address the health needs of patients.”

According to MARC, the most current estimate for the uninsured in the eight-county area is 245,439 (U.S. Census Bureau). This number does not take into account changes in the rate of uninsured as a result of the recession. As of March 2008, there were 203,989 individuals receiving Medicaid benefits in the eight-county metro area. MARC combines these numbers to estimate a total safety net population of 449,728, or 25 percent of the eight-county metro-area’s total population.

MARC Regional Health Care Initiative Director Laura McCrary notes that while there are 17 safety net organizations operating 33 primary medical care clinics in the eight-county region, there is still unmet need.

“We know from talking with clinic directors that wait times for appointments, and particularly for non-emergency care, is up to five weeks at many clinics, said McCrary. “Safety net clinics are operating at capacity during daytime hours. There is room to expand services after-hours, which also helps working parents and adults.”

The Regional Health Care Initiative at MARC works to identify and promote collaborative approaches to providing health care to the region’s uninsured and medically underserved. The initiative was launched in 2007 with financial support from Bank of America, the Hall Family Foundation, the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City, the H&R Block Foundation, REACH Healthcare Foundation, Sosland Foundation, Sunflower Foundation and the Wyandotte Health Foundation.

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About HCF

The Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City provides leadership, advocacy and resources that eliminate barriers to quality health for the uninsured and underserved in Kansas City, Missouri, Cass, Jackson and Lafayette counties in Missouri and Allen, Johnson and Wyandotte counties in Kansas. Since it began grantmaking in 2005, HCF has awarded over \$90 million to agencies addressing health needs in the community. For more information, visit www.healthcare4kc.org.

About REACH

The REACH Healthcare Foundation was established in 2003 for the purpose of addressing the health and health care needs of medically indigent and underserved individuals. Since 2005, REACH has invested \$19.6 million in programs and initiatives in three areas – safety net health services, oral health and mental health. For more information, visit www.reachhealth.org.