

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SPENCER, OK, APRIL 17, 2008: **MEDICAID GRANTS TO HELP IMPROVE
ACCESS TO PRIMARY CARE AND AVOID UNNECESSARY ER VISITS**

Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) announced today grants of \$50 million to 20 states to help improve access to primary medical care so that Medicaid beneficiaries could avoid improper use of costly hospital emergency rooms.

Created by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA), these grants will help Medicaid programs fund local and rural initiatives to provide alternative health care settings for individuals with non-emergent medical needs.

The DRA provided \$50 million to be distributed over four years (2006-2009) for primary health care programs, predominantly in rural and/or other underserved areas as well as programs that work closely with community hospitals.

Today's award of \$26 million will fund 29 programs in 20 states. The remaining \$24 million will be available to those grantees in 2009.

Grantees will use the funds to:

- establish new community health centers;
- extend the hours of operation at existing clinics;
- educate beneficiaries about new services; and
- provide for electronic health information exchange between facilities for better coordination of care.

States receiving grant funds under this program are Colorado , Connecticut , Georgia , Illinois , Indiana , Louisiana , Massachusetts , Maryland , Michigan , Missouri , New Jersey , North Carolina , North Dakota , Oklahoma , Pennsylvania , Rhode Island , South Dakota , Tennessee , Utah and Washington .

Oklahoma's grant recipient is Community Health Centers, Inc. the sponsor of Mary Mahoney Memorial Health Center, Healing Hands Health Care Services for the Homeless, Central Oklahoma Healthy Start, Positive Parents, Mary Mahoney Health Center at Langston and Perry A. Klaassen Family Medical Center. According to Rosalyn Johnson, Chief Executive Officer for Community Health Centers, Inc. "the opportunity to reduce inappropriate Emergency Department utilization and provide a primary health care home for Oklahomans is an exciting and welcomed challenge that CHCI is looking forward to meeting."

Today's action helps align Medicaid efforts with Medicare's value-based purchasing strategies, also designed to avoid unnecessary emergency room visits through improved physician care and strategies to decrease re-admissions.

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