

Texas Update – August 2009

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Tom Suehs Named Executive Commissioner of Health and Human Services

Gov. Rick Perry has named Thomas Suehs of Austin executive commissioner of Health and Human Services effective Sept. 1, 2009, for a term to expire Feb. 1, 2011. The Health and Human Services Commission provides leadership and strategic direction to the health and human services system in Texas, and the executive commissioner oversees the operations of the five health and human services agencies, including more than 50,000 employees and combined annual budgets of \$30 billion. Suehs replaces Albert Hawkins who retired from his post as executive commissioner this month. Suehs has served as deputy executive commissioner for financial services at the Health and Human Services Commission since 2003. His responsibilities include providing administrative leadership, oversight and direction for the financial management of all five Health and Human Services agencies. He is past executive director of the Texas Health Care Association, past deputy commissioner of the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, past president of the American Society of State Health Care Executives, and former special advisor to the Texas Indigent Health Care Task Force.

HB 2154 Update: Proposed Program Rules Posted and Open for Comment

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) has posted proposed rules for the expanded physician education loan repayment program in their [August 31, 2009 edition](#). TACHC had the opportunity to provide input on the crafting of the rules. The focus of the new program will be to encourage primary doctors to practice in high scoring HPSA areas, with an additional emphasis on practice in rural HPSAs and Federally Qualified Health Centers. **Comments are due to the THECB by 5:00 pm on September 21.** Comments on the proposal may be submitted to Dan Weaver, P.O. Box 12788, Austin, Texas 78711, (512) 427-6165, dan.weaver@thech.state.tx.us. Proposed rules and comments will be considered at the October 29, 2009 meeting of the Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Texas to Receive \$600 Million in Additional Federal Medicaid Funds

A provision of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 allows states whose three month unemployment rate averages above 6.9% to become eligible for as much as \$600 million in additional federal Medicaid funds. According to a recent memo from Representative Jim Dunnam, chair of the House Select Committee on Federal Economic Stabilization Funding, Texas has reached that threshold. According to the Texas Workforce Commission, the state's unemployment rate is 7.9%. While this is bad news for Texas workers, there is some relief in that Texas Medicaid should receive these additional funds sometime in October allowing the program to support the growing number of Texas families in need. Representative Dunnam's memo along with the Texas Workforce Commission press release can be found [here](#).

Highlight Your Health Center Nationally on the NACHC Economic Stimulus Map

Though [NACHC's Economic Stimulus Map](#) was launched during National Health Center Week, the project continues, and it is not too late to submit stories for display. When you check out the link, you will likely see that there are very few Texas stories, particularly compared to other areas of the country. So far the economic stimulus map has proven to be a very valuable tool in informing the press who regularly contact NACHC for stories about health centers. A reminder that if you want your health center to be added to the map, all you have to do is e-mail Amy Simmons (asimmons@nachc.com) or Beau Boughamer (bboughamer@nachc.com) with the name of the health center, address including city/state/zip, phone number, website address and a 75- to 100-word description of what they're doing with the stimulus funding, written in layman's terms. A photo is optional, but as these can be used to augment and promote the health center program for the national media, it's a benefit for all of us to have as many up there as possible!

Congratulations to La Esperanza Health and Dental Centers – Winners of the 2009 NHCW Advocacy Contest

This year's National Health Center Week was a definite success, with many centers reporting in with health fairs, screening days, visits from state and national elected officials. Governor Rick Perry declared the week Community Health Care Center Week in Texas – see that attached proclamation. Many of you also took part in the health reform debate, hosting members of Congress as they learned more about their constituents' views. And several centers took part in TACHC's advocacy contest. Here are the results:

Coming in with 116 new advocates (one new advocate for every 81 patients served in 2007) signed up for the TACHC grassroots advocacy network, **La Esperanza Health and Dental Centers** in San Angelo have won first prize in this year's National Health Center Week Advocacy contest. Their health center will receive one free registration to Annual Conference PLUS one free registration to the Advanced Board Training for one of their board members.

Second prize goes to **Vida Y Salud Health Systems** with 82 new advocates (one new advocate for every 85 patients served in 2007). Thanks to both health centers and other contest participants: Atascosa Health Center, Central Care Community Health Center, Community Health Centers of South Central Texas, and Good Neighbor Healthcare Center. If you missed

the deadline for the contest, we still need your advocates. You can send them in to Katie Coburn at the TACHC office.

TACHC Annual Conference Coming Soon

Be sure to register for TACHC's annual conference upcoming soon – November 1-3, 2009. Early bird specials are available before October 9. Stay tuned for an agenda to be out to members in the coming days. You can register online [here](#).

H1N1 Vaccine Ordering Information

The Department of State Health Services has opened a registration system through which healthcare providers must register to obtain Novel H1N1 vaccine. **PROVIDERS MUST REGISTER** through this system in order to obtain the vaccine. Registration is open through **September 6, 2009**. DSHS anticipates that vaccine will be shipped approximately mid-October. To register for vaccine distribution, go to <https://vaccineregistration.questionpro.com/> and fill out the form. When completing the form, please estimate the number of patients in each group, not the number of potential doses needed and register for each site where you will be giving vaccine. This will allow vaccine to be shipped directly to each site and will prevent health center staff from having to distribute vaccine to satellite clinics. For your maximum initial order, enter the maximum amount of vaccine for which you have storage capacity. Do not enter the maximum amount of vaccine that you estimate you will need, UNLESS you have storage capacity for that amount. You will have the opportunity to re-order vaccine after initial distribution. Healthcare providers who have questions can email H1N1vax@dshs.state.tx.us or can call 1-877-623-6274 between 8am-5pm M-F for more information. Please check www.texasflu.org regularly for updates. The Department of State Health Services will be providing more guidance on this situation as it unfolds. Additionally, TACHC will send out information as we receive it.

Please FORWARD this update and ask your colleagues to [CLICK HERE](#) to join as health center advocates.