

Texas Update - July 2009

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National Health Center Week Approaches amid Major National Health Care and Economic Discussions

National Health Center Week (NHCW), August 9-15, 2009, is right around the corner. Health centers across the country are making plans to outreach into their communities, celebrate access to care, host health fairs, and welcome elected officials to their facilities. Texas health centers have some very exciting events planned including grand openings of new sites, health fairs expected to draw thousands of children for immunizations, and hosting press conferences to honor TACHC's legislative awardees. Many of you will be hosting local, state, and federal elected officials during this week – a great way to build your relationships and celebrate together!

To join the national party, I encourage all of you, if you haven't done so already, to **post your NHCW events online** at www.healthcenterweek.org. Posting your events gives you and Texas a presence in the national celebration. It **also** showcases your events for potential sponsors who check this site regularly for new opportunities. Be sure to post today!

National Health Center Week this year comes at a critical time in the national health care debate and at a time when the economic stimulus package, under which health centers have seen significant funding, is under scrutiny. There are a number of **media tools and messaging guides** to help you navigate questions on these topics. Check out http://www.healthcenterweek.org/tools_kit.html for talking points, press materials, and background on NHCW.

Finally, to emphasize the positive impact of economic stimulus funding for health centers, NACHC is creating an **interactive map** where you can post stories of how your center is improving health care and providing jobs. [Email Amy Simmons](#) with news articles or a brief description of your event that will pop up on the map when a user clicks on your area. Here's an example compiled from a news report on one of your fellow Texas centers:

Recovery Act funds mean that Victor Ndando-Ngoo, CEO of Motherland Health Clinique, Inc in Houston, can pay the physician and nurse practitioners who volunteer at the health center. And thanks to a \$1.3 million grant from the stimulus, he wants "a dentist, an eye doctor and a lot of equipment." These services are critical for Texas, which has one of the highest uninsured rates in the nation. "When people got sick, they went to the emergency room. "There were no options in the community."

Don't forget to provide:

Name of health center

Location

Contact person/phone number

Pictures are always great too!

The map will go live on August 6, so [email your contributions](#) asap!

The 2009 TACHC Grassroots Advocacy Drive and Contest

If you receive this email, you are an important member of the Texas community health center online advocate community: our VoterVoice grassroots action system. You have joined us because you see value in the regular state and federal policy updates and the opportunities to quickly act on behalf of health centers with your Congressional and Texas Legislature representatives. As we showed during the 2009 Texas legislative session, the health center voice in Texas is strong. **But we can and must be stronger!**

TACHC is holding a grassroots advocacy drive during health center week this year. I've talked to many of you about the drive, and each health center will receive this week a packet of cards you can ask potential advocates (health center staff, board members, community partners, patients) to fill out to be a part of our online community. An electronic copy of the form is attached. The packet includes a memo explaining what it means to be a part of our online grassroots system.

And for those of you with a competitive streak, there are prizes for the two health centers who sign up the most new advocates (in proportion to the number of patients they serve).

1st Prize: One **FREE** Registration to TACHC's Annual Conference **PLUS** one **FREE** Registration to the Concurrent Advanced Board Training

2nd Prize: One **FREE** Registration to TACHC's Annual Conference

To be eligible to win, send completed cards to Katie Coburn, TACHC, 5900 Southwest Pkwy, Bldg 3, Austin, TX 78735 by Friday August 21!

Winners will be announced in the August edition of the Texas update.

HB 2154 Loan Repayment Program Update

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board staff is working with the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) on draft rules for the HB 2154 loan repayment program for consideration at the October 29, 2009 Coordinating Board meeting. Here are answers to some key questions:

When will rules governing the new program be in place? The Coordinating Board anticipates posting proposed new rules in the Texas Register by September 29, 2009, for adoption at the October 29 meeting of the Coordinating Board.

How do physicians apply for funds under the program? Physicians will either apply online through a web site housed at the Texas Department of State Health Services or will mail applications to that agency. The application has not been developed at this time. The *preliminary* timeline is to have an application available in December 2009, a final application deadline in April 2010, and a service start date of July 2010. These dates are subject to change.

Note: If you have feedback related to this timeline, please [let TACHC know](#) ASAP. We can work to incorporate your comments into further timeline discussions.

When will the first payments actually be made? The proposed timeline is for payments to be disbursed in July, 2011 for the first cohort of participants.

How many physicians will be eligible to receive loan assistance under the program? The estimated targets developed during the legislative session were to add 225 physicians to the program each year.

What is the role of the Texas Department of State Health Services in operating the new program? The Coordinating Board plans to enter into an MOU with the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) establishing the roles of DSHS and THECB. DSHS will perform the majority of outreach activities to promote awareness of the program. Additionally, DSHS will perform the following functions: receive and review applications, rank applications according to established criteria, notify applicants of selection, perform outreach and PR activities to get the word out on the program, verify practice and other data, and send appropriate student loan and other data necessary for THECB to perform its role. THECB will verify all loan information and disburse funds directly to the holders of the loans.

TACHC 2009 Texas Legislative Session Summary

Attached you will find TACHC's 2009 legislative summary with details on important health care legislation and state budget action on issues important to community health centers.

... and one addendum regarding provisions governing health services payment rates that illustrates that health centers need to be aware of additional scrutiny ahead on their Medicaid payments. Under a new provision included in the state budget, HHSC is now required to submit a list of any rate paid by that agency on September 1 of each year to the Legislative Budget Board, the Governor, and the State Auditor. HHSC is also required to provide those same entities notice any time those rates increase and state the resulting fiscal impact. FQHC Medicaid rates will be a part of this reporting. Another provision also requires that all state Medicaid transactions are subject to audit by the state auditor. Stay tuned to TACHC for updates and guidance.

National Health Reform Resources

The debate over national health reform will be continuing over the August recess when members of Congress will be at home to talk to their constituents. Be sure to check out the media tools at www.healthcenterweek.org to help you make the health center case for the

need for health care reform and the critical role of health centers in the new system. If you want more information about the bills and other discussion going on in the federal debate, NACHC is maintaining a [Health Reform Hub](#) where you can read the legislation, review fact sheets, and link to multiple analyses of the health care plans. For a Texas based resources, check out the [Texas Voice for Health Reform](#) site. You can sign up for regular email updates to join a broad base of organizations active for health reform. You can also see a newly released set of the [House health care proposal fact sheets by Congressional district](#), posted by the House Energy and Commerce Committee. See how your area would benefit!

Health and Human Services Executive Commissioner Albert Hawkins to Retire August 31

HHS Executive Commissioner Albert Hawkins will retire from state service on Aug. 31, 2009. As commissioner, Hawkins oversees the state's five health and human services agencies, which have combined budgets of \$25 billion a year and more than 50,000 employees. Gov. Perry appointed Hawkins to the role in January 2003. On learning of his decision to retire, Governor Perry said, "Albert Hawkins has been a quiet but powerful force in state government for decades. His budget expertise is renowned, and he has brought compassion and a commitment to quality to every job he's had. We are going to miss his leadership."

Hawkins, who has 35 years of experience in state government, led one of the largest reorganizations in U.S. history after the 2003 Texas Legislature consolidated 12 state agencies into five new agencies under his oversight. Before his appointment as health and human services executive commissioner, Hawkins served as a senior White House aide to President George W. Bush for two years. From 1995 to 2000, Hawkins was the budget director for the Governor's Office, and he worked at the Texas Legislative Budget Board for 16 years. No word yet on who will take over as Hawkins' successor.

Please forward this message and ask your friends to [SIGN UP](#) as a community health center advocate.