



KAISER JOINS HEALTHY S.F. PROVIDERS

June 3, 2009

Kaiser Permanente will become the next private health care organization to serve patients in San Francisco's universal health care program, helping to ease the burden on the financially strapped city clinics and San Francisco General Hospital.

Kaiser, the state's largest health care provider, expects to serve 3,000 Healthy San Francisco patients in its medical offices and hospital beginning July 1, joining a handful of other private hospitals and medical groups.

"We know firsthand that providing access to health care and giving people a medical home is a major step in improving people's health," said Christine Robisch, senior vice president and area manager for Kaiser in San Francisco.

Private medical groups benefit from participating because it can curb visits to their emergency rooms by uninsured people whom they cannot legally turn away. It also boosts their level of charity care, for which they get big tax breaks.

The Kaiser participation comes at a good time for the Department of Public Health, which would lose \$128 million under Mayor Gavin Newsom's budget proposal for the fiscal year starting July 1. Pink slips have gone out over recent months to 500 workers in the health department alone.

Healthy San Francisco, though, would get a \$9.54 million increase as primary care becomes the focus of the department at the expense of supplementary services for the mentally ill and drug and alcohol addicted.

"As we deal with severe budget constraints in San Francisco, this expansion demonstrates that we are committed to our universal health care program," said Nathan Ballard, Newsom's press secretary. "Healthy San Francisco was conceived as a public-private partnership, and now the private side is kicking into high gear."

When Newsom announces the Kaiser partnership today, he'll also announce that the 2-year-old Healthy San Francisco program has reached a new benchmark: 40,000 patients.

That means the city is two-thirds of the way to reaching all its 60,000 uninsured residents, though the 60,000 estimate may be low because it was made in 2007, during much better economic times.

Healthy San Francisco is available to city residents earning less than 500 percent of the federal poverty level (\$54,150 for a single person or \$110,250 for a family of four.) It is funded by city and state funds, employer contributions and patient fees based on a sliding scale. For information on joining, go to healthysanfrancisco.org.

When the program began, patients were seen at one of 27 community clinics for their primary care needs and at San Francisco General Hospital for inpatient services. Last summer, three private, nonprofit hospitals joined: California Pacific Medical Center, St. Francis and St. Mary's. In addition, UCSF Medical Center provides diagnostic imaging services to all Healthy San Francisco participants.

About Kaiser Permanente Ventures:

Kaiser Permanente Ventures, the corporate venture capital arm of Kaiser Permanente, makes investments in medical devices, healthcare services and information technology companies. Kaiser Permanente Ventures is dedicated to partnering with entrepreneurial companies to build innovative and enduring businesses that advance the quality and affordability of health care. Since its inception in 1997, Kaiser Permanente Ventures has invested in more than 25 venture-capital backed companies at all stages of development, and contributed organizational expertise, time and resources to the success of these companies. For additional information please visit www.kpventures.com.