

Comments on Navigators: Clinica Sierra Vista

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Clinica Sierra Vista currently employs Eligibility Assistance Workers who help anyone who walks in our doors complete and submit applications to programs like Medi-Cal, Healthy Families, CalFresh, etc. These assistors are entirely funded through a combination of CalFresh funding and local grant money. Should this funding no longer be available, these staff would be lost and these services would no longer be offered to the community.

Our Eligibility Assistance Workers conduct ongoing case management to ensure families are approved, maintain enrollment and know how to utilize their new benefits. We have found that having Eligibility Assistance Workers in our health centers improves health care access and reduces health care costs for consumers and ultimately the state, since a majority of new enrollees are enrolled in Medi-Cal. In addition, we see improvement in disease management and an increase in the number of community members who are medically served.

Contrary to the recommendation that Community Health Centers should provide uncompensated enrollment assistance because it is already part of our mission and commitment to the community, we must remember and consider that Community Health Centers:

- 1) are not reimbursed for providing enrollment assistance and are constantly struggling to maintain the current level of services
- 2) are constantly facing cuts to our Medi-Cal reimbursement rates due to the state and federal budgets
- 3) enrollment expenses are not reimbursed through any state and federal mechanisms.

Our Eligibility Assistance Workers put a human face to health care reform, are culturally and linguistically aligned with the communities we serve, and have established relationships with the community. It therefore makes sense that Community Health Center Eligibility Assistance Workers serve in a full Navigator capacity.