

San Francisco Gets Healthy

Contributed by PT Editors
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Healthy San Francisco, the first municipality-initiated program of its kind in the nation, is addressing voter demands for universal healthcare for the city's 82,000 uninsured residents.

The new plan is administered by San Francisco Health Plan (SFHP) in partnership with the San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH). To blanket the city in a "health care safety net", the plan redirects \$104 million worth of funding from its emergency services into long-term care for the uninsured, focusing on primary and preventative care. The plan's origins can be traced back to 1998, when the city passed Measure J, making it city policy to provide affordable, preventative health care services to the uninsured. Healthy San Francisco has already proven popular in its second-month trial period, having reached over 1,000 patients. The plan is set to establish 20 more locations citywide, expanding its staff and services through city and county funds, state funds, and a grant from the federal government.

Below is a chronology of the new health care plan:

- 1998: Measure J passed:

Made it City policy to create a health care purchasing program that allows private employers to voluntarily purchase affordable health care insurance, to use the market strength of the city to lower the cost of coverage, and to offer insurance programs that encourage regular use of preventative health care services.

- 2002: San Francisco's Healthy Kids program established:

Mayor Gavin Newsom's "Time for a Change" budget redirects \$1.9 million of savings garnered in jail health cuts to expand Healthy Kids. Began by covering nearly 4,000 San Francisco children aged 0-18 who would otherwise be uninsured.

- 2005: The Healthy Kids program is renamed Healthy Kids and Young Adults, extending its services to young adults aged 19-24.

- July, 2007: Healthy San Francisco begins its first phase of implementation in the Chinatown community at Chinatown Public Health Center and North East Medical Services. When the program began, it was projected that enrollment would be 600 - 1,000 by the end of August.

- September, 2007: Healthy San Francisco has enrolled more than 1,300 residents. Services are limited to the uninsured living below the poverty line; however, beginning this November any resident uninsured for at least 90 days will have access, regardless of income or immigration status.