How Will the Supreme Court Decision to Uphold the Affordable Care Act Impact Santa Barbara County?

The Supreme Court decision to uphold the Affordable Care Act will increase the rate of the insured and improve access for residents to obtain health care in Santa Barbara County. The County has estimated some specific impacts to local residents and initiated steps to prepare for the full implementation of the Act in 2014.

There are approximately 67,000 residents without health care coverage in Santa Barbara County currently. This Act will reduce the number without coverage to about 27,000. Most of the uninsured will be covered under Medi-Cal and Medi-Cal enrollment is projected to increase by 25,000 upon full implementation of the law in 2014 if California chooses to opt in to the Medicaid expansion. Approximately 49,000 residents, (including individuals with and without health care coverage now), will be enrolled in Health Exchanges in 2014.

The Public Health Department has begun preparing for full implementation of the Affordable Care Act by increasing our capacity and strengthening our infrastructure. Specifically, we are:

- Working closely with our partners (e.g. hospitals, pharmacies, specialty medical providers…) on improved communication and coordination to strengthen the local safety net
- Implementing an Electronic Health Record (EHR) to increase efficiency and sharing of key medical data
- Implementing e-prescribing (electronic prescriptions for medications)
- Streamlining eligibility and enrollment for Medi-Cal for patients coming to our Health Care Centers in concert with the Department of Social Services
- Making improvements to our program serving Medically Indigent Adults
- Enhancing our integration of personal health and behavioral health

The Public Health Department will continue to assess the impacts of full implementation of the new law and prepare to provide quality health care services to the residents of our County.

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