



The Leon County LINK

Connecting Citizens with Leon County Services

Leon County Community Healthcare Plan



When most people feel sick, they visit their primary care physician or a medical clinic to receive care or treatment for their ailment. Unfortunately, that isn't an option for many Leon County residents. Health problems often go untreated until they become too serious to ignore any longer. According to Mercer Consulting, leading experts in the field of uninsured healthcare, between 22,000 and 31,000 Leon County residents are uninsured. Many of these working families can't afford increasing insurance costs, or their employer doesn't offer health insurance. Many of these people turn to the emergency room, and, having no money to pay for the services, their unpaid hospital bills are passed on to insurance payers through increased premiums. This increase in premiums is referred to as the "invisible tax," and it sets a cycle in motion that: leads to more uninsured residents, which lead to higher uncompensated costs, which lead to increased insurance premiums, which lead to more uninsured residents. Mercer Consulting evaluated Leon County's need and stated in its report: "Leon County, along with those in most other parts of the nation, is facing a health care cost crisis." They concluded this situation will become worse if it is not addressed.

THE PLAN

The Leon County Board of County Commissioners has a plan to provide essential healthcare services to the uninsured, working poor, and medically-needy residents of our community in the most cost-effective manner, to be funded through an additional ½-cent sales tax, subject to voter approval. Leon County voters will have an opportunity to vote on this issue in a referendum on November 7, 2006. The Plan will provide approximately 9,000 residents with primary healthcare and other basic medical services.

The Board's decision to place this important issue before the voters was the latest in a series of steps the Board has taken over the past several years to address healthcare for the uninsured, including collaboration with the CareNet partners and implementing the Primary Healthcare Program in 2001, funding it through a property tax.



What is the Plan?

- The Plan would operate like an HMO to provide basic health coverage for eligible Leon County residents. Leon County will negotiate with providers to establish reimbursement rates while maximizing taxpayer dollars for efficient services.
- The Plan would focus on preventive and primary healthcare and would offer significantly less health coverage than commercially-available insurance like that provided by an employer or purchased by an individual.
- The Plan would provide appropriate and cost-effective care to those who would otherwise seek healthcare alternatives of last resort- like that rendered in emergency rooms-which come with the highest costs and result in worse health outcomes for the entire community.
- The Plan estimates a 9,000 person "mature enrollment," based on Mercer's actuarial evaluation of low-income patient utilization of medical services.



How Much Does the Plan Cost Me?

- It is estimated that each insured person in Leon County currently pays an "invisible tax," passed on to them in inflated medical costs and insurance premiums due to uncompensated medical care for the uninsured.
- Leon County property owners are currently paying 100% of the existing healthcare program through a special property tax. The property tax may be eliminated if voters approve the sales tax to fund the new Plan.
- The proposed ½-cent sales tax would generate an estimated \$18 million annually and will cost each Leon County resident just over \$50 per year, or about \$1 a week.
 - The maximum amount of additional tax on any transaction is \$25 because the tax can only be levied on the first \$5,000 of any sale.
 - 22% of the sales tax would be paid by visitors to Leon County.

Who Will be Eligible to Participate in the Community Healthcare Plan?

- Leon County's residents whose total household income falls below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and who are:
 - Between the ages of 18 and 64.
 - Not enrolled or qualified for Medicaid or Medicare.
 - Not enrolled or qualified for any other state or federal healthcare program.
 - Not offered insurance by their employer.

YOU HAVE A SAY ABOUT THE PLAN Get Educated and Vote in November



Leon County citizens will have an opportunity to vote on whether to support funding this program through a ½-cent sales tax. The referendum will take place on November 7, 2006. Whether or not to provide healthcare to qualified residents, and the question of how to fund it, are very important questions facing this community. In the coming months, Leon County will work diligently to educate the public on this Plan so that all citizens can vote with confidence in November. Visit www.leoncountyfl.gov to learn more.

Town Hall Meetings

Leon County is hosting several town hall meetings for the public to learn more.

Tuesday, Sept. 26, 6:30 p.m.
North Florida Fairgrounds, Building 2
441 Paul Russell Rd.

Monday, Oct. 2, 6:30 p.m.
Chiles High School Auditorium
7200 Lawton Chiles Ln.

Tuesday, October 3, 6:30 p.m.
Fort Braden Community Center
16387 Blountstown Hwy.

Monday, Oct. 16, 6 p.m.
Canopy Oaks Elementary School
3250 Point View Dr.

Tuesday, Oct. 17, 6:30 p.m.
Miccosukee Community Center
13887 Billingsley Rd.

Monday, Oct. 23, 6:30 p.m.
Dorothy Cooper Spence Community Center (Chaires)
4768 Chaires Rd.