

NEWS RELEASE



El Dorado County
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Local Collaborative Helps Children Find Medical Homes and Reduces Hospital Emergency Room Visits

A collaborative partnership involving El Dorado County agencies, health care facilities and physicians, called Access El Dorado (ACCEL), is reporting good results from a local effort to help improve child access to health care. “We looked at children who were routinely using the hospital emergency department for non-urgent primary care, such as ear aches or colds, to see if we could better match them with a doctor in the community,” said Sandra Dunn, ACCEL Program Manager. “In a two year period, ACCEL found medical homes for 244 children in El Dorado County and helped reduce visits to the emergency department.”

According to Dunn, the new strategy to help kids showing up at the emergency department was launched in August 2006. An outreach worker from El Dorado County Public Health began contacting the families of non-urgent (and in some instances uninsured) children who came to Marshall Medical Center’s emergency room, and assisted the parents in finding health insurance, if needed, and a regular doctor for their child. ACCEL physicians accepted the child into their practice for ongoing care and coordinated with the outreach worker who also continued educating and coaching the parents to become more active partners with their child’s doctor.

“We found that parents were often intimidated by the health care system or didn’t know how to navigate barriers,” said Dunn. “Our job was to help them work through those barriers and create a better pathway to health.” According to Dunn, the process of the outreach worker assisting the family through the various steps to access and use health benefits was referred to as a “Care Pathway.”

A study to measure the effectiveness of the new cross agency coordinated effort was recently conducted by an independent evaluation company, The Sphere Institute. The study from Sphere Institute showed that, a year after being assisted by the ACCEL Medical Home Care Pathway, there was a 47% reduction among those children who had most frequently used the hospital emergency department for primary care services. “Not only are these children now getting more prompt and convenient medical attention, but they have also been introduced to preventive health care services at their new medical home,” said Dr. Jonathan Lehrman, Marshall Medical Center physician and ACCEL physician leader.

ACCEL is a partnership among community physicians and medical service agencies, including: the El Dorado County Health Services Department, Marshall Medical Center, Barton Healthcare System, the El Dorado County Community Health Center, and the Shingle Springs Tribal Health Clinic.

For more information about ACCEL, visit www.accelecdc.org.

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