

Item #22
4-24-07



April 20, 2007

Dear Concerned Community Members:

On behalf of a million Central Valley Medi-Cal beneficiaries, health care providers, and the professional state employees who serve both of them, we are asking you to join our campaign to keep the Fresno Medi-Cal office open. The state Department of Health Services (DHS) has announced that it will close the office in November 2007.

The attached fact sheet explains how closing the office will harm beneficiaries and small businesses in the 14-county region we serve. Our members will most likely find other jobs, but the community we serve will experience a sharp decline in the quality and timeliness of service.

With enough local support, we can influence the state Legislature to keep the Fresno office open. So we ask you to:

- ∞ Sign and return the enclosed petition by May 15. It will be presented to the leaders of the state legislature .
- ∞ Write a letter to your state legislators, with copies to the Governor and the director of DHS, asking them to keep the Fresno Medi-Cal office open. Sample letters and a directory are included in this packet.

Thank you in advance for your support. Please call Kathleen Phillips at (559) 909-0915 or Gloria Cantu at (559) 226-0756 #105 for more information.

Sincerely,

Yvonne Walker
Vice President for Bargaining
SEIU Local 1000

Kathleen Phillips, RN
Committee to Save the
Fresno Medi-Cal Office

SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION
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April 2007

KEEP THE FRESNO MEDI-CAL OFFICE OPEN

The state Department of Health Services (DHS) has announced plans to close the Fresno Medi-Cal field office this coming November. More than likely, members of SEIU Local 1000 employed there will find other jobs. **However, we are concerned that the one million beneficiaries and the more than 250 health care providers in 14 counties served by this office won't be as fortunate.**

Why are they closing?

DHS has given the following reasons for closing the Fresno office:

- ∞ It is inconvenient for management to travel to Fresno. Medi-Cal Operations Chief Sunni Burns made this claim at a meeting with employees of the Fresno office in November 2006.
- ∞ Fresno Medi-Cal office staff members do not have contact with beneficiaries or providers, so their work can be handled from a remote location.
- ∞ The Fresno office must close for consistency in the Treatment Authorization Review (TAR) process.

These reasons don't stand up to close examination.

For example:

- ∞ Fresno is served by major highways, five airlines and 12 trains daily.
- ∞ The Fresno office contacts providers and beneficiaries daily and is known for its outstanding customer service. While some other field offices are 30-60 days behind in processing their TARs, Fresno is current. Medi-Cal Case Management (MCM) staff has daily contact with beneficiaries and providers. **In 2005 the Fresno MCM unit generated approximately \$10 million in savings to the state.**
- ∞ "There is no consistency in how TARs are adjudicated." Even if this was a true statement, the solution is not closing an office in a growing metropolitan area, but education in the TAR process, Title XXII and the Allied Health Manual. Each field office is responsible for a different subset of TAR decisions, with different requirements for each subset.

Financial considerations: The Fresno office has among the lowest operating costs in the state. Just as important is the cost to providers. Keeping TARs current allows for timely billing and payment to the providers. Most of the Durable Medical Equipment (DME) providers are small businesses that need to keep their accounts receivable current, or they too may be out of business.

There's no plan: DHS does not appear to have a detailed plan for providing uninterrupted and timely service to beneficiaries and providers. DHS has been unresponsive to our requests for more information, except to say that Fresno work will be transferred to other offices, which are already understaffed and backlogged. This will result in unacceptable delays and undermine good patient care.

Patient/provider contact: DHS states that beneficiaries and providers will not be affected, that there will be no break in services for onsite hospital visits and case management. But the Fresno staff is in the field every day. The Utilization Review (UR) department makes weekly visits to the hospitals in its service area. They review the TARs onsite. Medi-Cal Case Management (MCM) staff is also in the community visiting hospitals, home health agencies, clinics and durable medical equipment (DME) providers. They visit the homes of the beneficiaries to assess their needs. Without backup support services in Fresno, they will be unable to do their jobs properly and efficiently. Staff from other field offices clearly cannot provide this level of service.

STATEMENTS BY PROVIDERS

“Our Medi-Cal population is growing and many of these patients have complex care needs in the home. Our Medi-Cal Case Manager has consistently made on-site visits to our most complicated patients’ homes to make sure that the right services and equipment are getting to the patient. Without this support we would not be able to manage these complex patients in the home due to the red tape and time it takes to secure equipment through the usual Medi-Cal processes. We receive consultation from our Case Manager regarding how we can best meet the needs of our patients, support on how to navigate through the complex Medi-Cal system, and speedy approval of TARs. If the Fresno office is closed it will greatly impact our ability to accept Medi-Cal patients due to the complications we will surely experience with reimbursement and the unmet medical equipment needs of these patients.”

--Ridgecrest Regional Hospital

“Our Case Management Department works very closely with the Fresno Field Office and has established an excellent working relationship that includes timeliness of returned TARs, excellent response to appeal of services denied, and the exceptional working relationship with the Case Management nurse who is instrumental in assisting with approvals for patients requiring outside services in the home. We are concerned that with the closing of the field offices these services would be lost, causing both our patients and our organization a hardship.”

--San Joaquin Community Hospital

“By closing the Fresno Field Office, our concern is that the overwhelming effect and burden it will create for the Sacramento Medi-Cal office will only further delay the provision of services within the valley, compounded by the profound effect it will have on the economy with a multitude of lay-offs. The profound domino effect will border on catastrophic...”

--Fresno Adult Day Health Care Facility

KEEP THE FRESNO MEDI-CAL OFFICE OPEN

The undersigned residents and health care providers in the 14-county area served by the Fresno Medi-Cal field office request that the California Department of Health Services (DHS) keep this highly effective office open. DHS is proposing to close the office in November 2007.

The Fresno office is a model of outstanding customer service. The staff facilitates the provision of medical services to the most vulnerable people in our communities. While some of the other field offices are 30 to 60 days behind in processing Treatment Authorization Requests (TARs), Fresno is current. Keeping paperwork current allows for timely billing and payment to the providers. Many providers are small businesses that must keep accounts receivable current in order to stay open.

The Fresno office is also cost-effective. In 2005, the Fresno Medi-Cal Case Management (MCM) unit generated approximately \$10 million in savings to the state.

DHS does not have a detailed plan for providing uninterrupted and timely service to beneficiaries and providers. Transferring Fresno's work to other field office--already backlogged and understaffed--will simply increase delays. This is unacceptable in terms of providing good patient care and for provider retention.

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE
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Please return this survey to the SEIU Local 1000 Fresno Office: 1551 E. Shaw Avenue, Suite 139, Fresno CA 93710 or FAX to (559) 226-7679. We will also pick up your petitions if you call (559) 226-0756, extension 105.

(over)

SAMPLE PROVIDER LETTER

The most effective letters are individualized and personal. Please use this letter as a sample, adding examples from your experience. Please use the attached directory to find the appropriate street address, phone number or e-mail address.

Dear _____

I am writing to request your help in keeping the Fresno Medi-Cal Field Office open. Unfortunately, the Department of Health Services has announced plans to close the office in November 2007.

My company has a contract with the state to provide medical services to the Medi-Cal population in our county. Our ability to provide safe patient care is dependent on timely approvals for authorizations of services. Our cash flow is dependent on timely reimbursement. The quality and timeliness of the Fresno office's response has been excellent. DHS cannot possibly provide the same service for our 14-county region from other offices, which are uniformly understaffed.\

Providers in other counties have waited for weeks, and sometimes months, for approval from their field offices. These delays are unacceptable. If the Fresno office is closed, it may impact our ability to accept Medi-Cal patients in the future.

Please use your influence to maintain this office and the services it provides to the Central Valley. Please contact me if you need additional information. We deeply appreciate any assistance you can provide.

Sincerely,

Your name
Your title
Your company

SAMPLE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LETTER

Dear _____

On behalf of my constituents in _____ I request your help in keeping the Fresno Medi-Cal Field Office open. Unfortunately, the Department of Health Services has announced plans to close the office in November 2007.

Fully one-third of California's Medi-Cal beneficiaries reside in this 14-county area, and that total is likely to grow as our region continues to develop. The Fresno office has always provided outstanding customer service, which is not only important to our beneficiaries but to our health care providers. These providers are an important segment of our employment and revenue base, and we do not want to see them hurt because of delays in processing their authorization requests and payments.

We are aware of providers in other counties who have waited for weeks – and sometimes months – for approval from their field offices. These delays are unacceptable. If the Fresno office is closed, it may severely impact the quality of medical care received by our constituents, as well as the ability of some our providers to accept Medi-Cal patients in the future.

Please use your influence to maintain this office and the services it provides to the Central Valley. Please contact me if you need additional information. We deeply appreciate any assistance you can provide.

Sincerely,

Your name

Your title

CONTACT ELECTED AND APPOINTED STATE OFFICIALS TO KEEP THE FRESNO DHS MEDI-CAL OFFICE OPEN

We encourage you to send a letter to the governor, with copies to DHS Director Sandra Shewry, the chairs of the State Senate and Assembly Health Committees, and your district's state senator and assemblyperson.

Please send a copy of your letter to SEIU Local 1000 at 1551 East Shaw Avenue, # 139, , Fresno, CA 93710, or e-mail to gcantu@seiu1000.org

For a directory of your local legislators, see back page.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
State of California
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Director Sandra Shewry
California Department of Health Services
PO Box 997431
Sacramento, CA 95899-7413

State Senator Sheila Kuehl
Chair, Senate Health Committee
State Capitol, Room
Sacramento 94249

Assembly Member Mervyn Dymally
Chair, Assembly Health Committee
State Capitol, Room 6005
Sacramento 94249
(916) 319-2052

State Senator Roy Ashburn
State Capitol, Room 5094
Sacramento, CA 94249
(661) 323-0443

State Senator Jeff Denham
State Capitol, Room 3076
Sacramento, CA 94249
(209) 577-6592

State Senator Dean Florez
State Capitol, Room 5061
Sacramento, CA 95814
(559) 264-3070

State Senator Charles Poochigian
State Capitol, Room 5087
Sacramento, CA 95814
(559) 253-7122

Assembly Member Juan Arambula
State Capitol, Room 6011
Sacramento CA 94249

Assembly Member Bill Maze
State Capitol, Room 4015
Sacramento CA 94249

Assembly Member Kevin McCarthy
State Capitol, Room 3098
Sacramento, CA 94249

Assembly Member Nicole Parra
State Capitol, Room 4005
Sacramento, CA 94249

Assembly Member Michael Villines
State Capitol, Room 4153
Sacramento, CA 94249

Assembly Member David Cogdill
State Capitol, Room 4208
Sacramento, CA 94249

SEIU Local 1000
1551 E. Shaw Avenue, #139
Fresno, CA 93710

<i>Office</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>City, State</i>	<i>Zip</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Email Address</i>
	SEIU Local 1000	Fresno Office	1551 E. Shaw Avenue, #139	Fresno, CA	93710	559.226.0756	
Senator	Joe Simitian	11th District	State Capital, Room 4062	Sacramento, CA	95814	916.651.4011	senator.simitian@sen.ca.gov
Senator	Jeff Denham	12th District	State Capital, Room 3076	Sacramento, CA	95814	916.651.4012	senator.denham@sen.ca.gov
Senator	Dave Cogdill	14th District	State Capital, Room 3048	Sacramento, CA	95814	916.651.4014	senator.cogdill@sen.ca.gov
Senator	Abel Maldonado	15th District	State Capital, Room 4082	Sacramento, CA	95814	916.651.4015	senator.maldonado@sen.ca.gov
Senator	Dean Florez	16th District	State Capital, Room 5061	Sacramento, CA	95814	916.651.4016	senator.florez@sen.ca.gov
Senator	Roy Ashburn	18th District	State Capital, Room 3063	Sacramento, CA	95814	916.651.4018	senator.ashburn@sen.ca.gov
Senator	Tom McClinck	19th District	State Capital, Room 3070	Sacramento, CA	95814	916.651.4019	senator.mcclinck@sen.ca.gov
Assembly Member	Cathleen Galgiani	17th District	State Capital, PO Box 942849	Sacramento, CA	94249	916.319.2017	assemblymember.galgiani@assembly.ca.gov
Assembly Member	Tom Berryhill	25th District	State Capital, Room 4116	Sacramento, CA	95814	916.319.2025	assemblymember.berryhill@assembly.ca.gov
Assembly Member	Greg Aghazarian	26th District	State Capital, Room 4167	Sacramento, CA	95814	916.319.2026	assemblymember.aghazarian@assembly.ca.gov
Assembly Member	John Laird	27th District	State Capital, PO Box 942849	Sacramento, CA	94249	916.319.2027	assemblymember.laird@assembly.ca.gov
Assembly Member	Anna Caballero	28th District	State Capital, PO Box 942849	Sacramento, CA	94249	916.319.2028	assemblymember.caballero@assembly.ca.gov
Assembly Member	Michael Villines	29th District	State Capital, Room 3104	Sacramento, CA	95814	916.319.2029	assemblymember.villines@assembly.ca.gov
Assembly Member	Nicole Parra	30th District	State Capital, PO Box 942849	Sacramento, CA	94249	916.319.2030	assemblymember.parra@assembly.ca.gov
Assembly Member	Juan Arambula	31st District	State Capital, PO Box 942849	Sacramento, CA	94249	916.319.2031	assemblymember.arambula@assembly.ca.gov
Assembly Member	Jean Fuller	32nd District	State Capital, Room 3098	Sacramento, CA	95814	916.319.2032	assemblymember.fuller@assembly.ca.gov
Assembly Member	Sam Blakeslee	33rd District	State Capital, Room 4117	Sacramento, CA	95814	916.319.2033	assemblymember.blakeslee@assembly.ca.gov
Assembly Member	Bill Maze	34th District	State Capital, Room 5160	Sacramento, CA	95814	916.319.2034	assemblymember.maze@assembly.ca.gov
Assembly Member	Pedro Nava	35th District	State Capital, PO Box 942849	Sacramento, CA	94249	916.319.2035	assemblymember.nava@assembly.ca.gov

