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Orange County Health Needs Assessment Partnership for Health



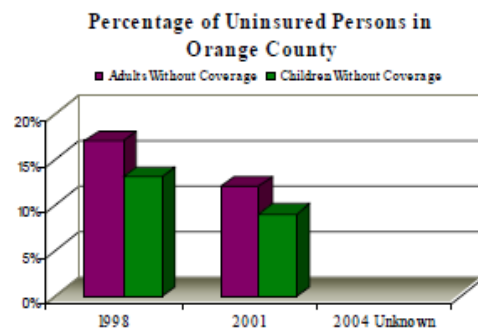
Access to Health
Care in the Context
of Orange County's
Economic Climate

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Current Status of Health Care Coverage in Orange County

The OCHNA survey found the percentage of Orange County residents without health care coverage to be nearly 12% (240,000) for adults and 9% (69,000) for children in 2001, representing approximately 309,000 Orange County residents overall. While these percentages represent a significant decrease compared to survey results in 1998, they continue to represent a large part of Orange County residents.



Gaps and Disparities in Health Care Coverage for Adults and Children

- 53% of all adults without health care coverage are Latino/Hispanic.¹
- 7.5% of adults aged 55-64 are without health care coverage.¹
- 48.3% of all children without health care coverage are Latino/Hispanic.¹
- 51,000 uninsured children are eligible for Medi-Cal or Healthy Families.²

Policy Change Effecting Health Care for Orange County Residents

Medi-Cal

With unemployment on the rise, the cost of living continuing to rise, and shrinking income eligibility levels for Medi-Cal, Orange County residents who seek assistance in obtaining health care services will face more obstacles in upcoming years.

- **Reduction of income eligibility** to 61% of the federal poverty level³ or \$12,000 a year for a family of four.
- **California Budget cuts totaling \$167,350,000** to Medi-Cal alone will be accomplished through proposed legislation to eliminate "optional" Medi-Cal benefits including, but not limited to, medical supplies, mental health services, and dental care for adults 21 and older who are not in long term care³. OCHNA data shows one in three adults are without dental care coverage.
- **A 10% reduction in payments** to Medi-Cal physicians and providers is proposed, potentially creating a disincentive for providers who would otherwise accept Medi-Cal payers.³
- **Reinstating bureaucratic red tape**, by increasing Medi-Cal reporting requirements from bi-annual to quarterly, increasing the likelihood of loss of coverage to current recipients resulting in increased hospital Emergency Room visits and patient loads for community clinics causing a discontinuity of care³.
- **\$2.5 million cut for the State's Office on Aging**, eliminating programs such as the Respite Registry Program, Senior Companion Program and the Brown Bag Program, all aimed at improving the quality of life for mature adults.

Healthy Families

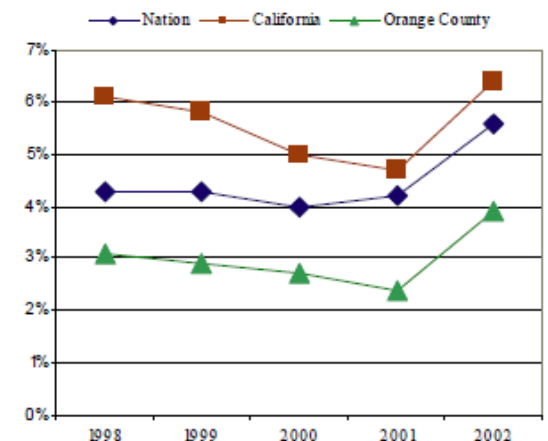
Healthy Families has become an accessible alternative for families with incomes above the Medical Eligibility limits, reaching 59,752 children as of October 1st 2002⁴.

- **Over 60%** of all new enrollees for Healthy Families are enrolled by Certified Application Assistants.³
- **A reduction in outreach activities** for both Medi-Cal and Healthy Families is proposed, including the elimination of training for Certified Application Assistants³. This reduction could seriously impact the enrollment of eligible children, with parents who need assistance completing lengthy forms.
- **Bottom Line?** Decrease in access for children, increase in the number of uninsured, increase in hospital Emergency Room visits increase in clinic patient load, adding to overall costs at the local level.

Current Economic Considerations

The current economic downturn has potentially far reaching effects. California's Governor has announced dramatic budget cuts, which effect many health and human service organizations. Many of the great gains made by progressive programs such as Healthy Families may be lost if community members aren't all the more vigilant and dedicated to at least maintaining and hopefully, continuing to decrease our county's uninsured population.

Unemployment Rates



- As of October 2002, there were 7,100 more unemployed persons in Orange County compared to October of 2001.⁶
- 1,800 more individuals were unemployed in October 2002 than January 2002.⁴
- OCHNA survey results show a 3% drop in employer based coverage⁵. As unemployment rates rise, a further decrease in the availability of employer based coverage is likely. The concern over an increase in the uninsured due to job loss is compounded by the rescission of the expansion of Medi-Cal and Healthy Families.
- The Consumer Price Index is up 3% since October 2001⁷, demonstrating the ever increasing cost of living for Orange County residents.
- The cost of housing has increased 19%⁸ since October 2001, rental prices have increased 2.4% since July 2001⁹.

¹OCHNA Spring Report, 2002

²California Health Interview Survey, 2001

³Healthy Families Effort Continues, Despite Giveback, Prepared by the California HealthCare Foundation's Medi-Cal Policy Institute.

⁴MRMB

⁵Of those reporting coverage through their employer, both years

⁶State of California, Employment Development Department

⁷US Department of Labor

⁸Data Quick

⁹RealFacts