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$5.7 Million in Grants Awarded for Innovative Projects to Improve Health Information Technology, Targeted at Underserved Areas

(Sacramento) – The Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) today announced $5.7 million in grants aimed at promoting health information technology and medical education to improve California's health care delivery system for underserved populations. This funding is the third of four rounds of grant awards, and comes from a total of $50 million in charitable investments required by the state from PacificCare Health Systems when it merged with UnitedHealth Group in 2005.

"It is important to continue investment in crucial telemedicine technology and electronic health records projects, especially for safety net providers," said Cindy Ehnes, Director of the DMHC. "Expanding health information technology is a major component of comprehensive health care reform: it improves access to underserved Californians, increases patient safety, and reduces overall health care costs."

The grants, ranging from $105,194 to $1,304,943, have been awarded to health care providers, clinics, and community groups for projects such as enhancing electronic health record systems for hospitals and clinics, developing clinical asthma education tools, and helping homeless patients after they are discharged from the hospital.

Last year, the Schwarzenegger administration announced more than $12 million in similar grants. Last November, Governor Schwarzenegger also announced an additional $22 million in grants to expand telemedicine across the state. A coalition of state agencies and private sector stakeholders, led by the University of California Office of the President, will use these grant funds, awarded by the Federal Communications Commission, to build a new California Telehealth Network that will increase access to care for rural communities by linking academic teaching hospitals and rural health care providers.

The fourth and final phase of the grant-application process runs January 5 through February 20, 2009. Copies of the Request for Proposal, which includes complete instructions and information on qualifications, are available on line at www.dmhc.ca.gov.

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In July 2006, Governor Schwarzenegger signed an executive order establishing the goal of 100 percent electronic health data exchange in California during the next ten years. Since then, the DMHC and other state agencies have drafted a health information technology action plan to promote its adoption. The following 13 projects were selected to receive grants:

- Asian Pacific Health Care Venture Inc. in Los Angeles received a $299,393 grant to enhance technology for business continuity and electronic health records;
- Bienvenidos Children's Center Inc. in Los Angeles received a $105,194 grant to purchase information technology equipment that will enhance its service and recordkeeping;
- Breathe California-Golden Gate Public Health Partnership in Daly City received a $300,471 grant to develop clinical asthma education materials and tools for health care providers serving Sonoma, Napa, and Mendocino county residents;
- California Dental Association Foundation in Sacramento received a $500,000 grant to enhance its research network that will provide dental care to 900 patients in the San Francisco Bay area, and in the Southern California and Central Valley regions;
- California Rural Indian Health Board Inc. in Sacramento received a $427,987 grant to implement electronic health records in tribally operated health programs;
- Fresno-based Hospital Council of Northern & Central California received a $560,000 grant to support the Santa Clara Valley medical respite program that helps homeless patients after they are discharged from the hospital;
- The Institute for Palliative Medicine of San Diego received a $1,203,547 grant to help develop, implement, and evaluate palliative care telehealth consultation services;
- La Maestra Community Health Centers in San Diego received a $164,123 grant to implement a culturally and linguistically sensitive lifestyle-modification program targeting low-income, immigrant, and minority residents in the central region of San Diego;
- Nurse-Family Partnership in Oakland received a $500,000 grant for its community health program that enables mothers who are pregnant with their first child to visit with a registered nurse early in pregnancy and receive ongoing home visits from the nurse for the child's first two years;
- City of Industry-based Public Health Foundation Enterprises Inc. received a $1,304,943 grant to improve the coordination and delivery of health care for vulnerable populations throughout Los Angeles County via the Los Angeles County Safety Net Health Information Exchange Project;
- St. Vincent Medical Center in Los Angeles received a $465,704 grant to expand its hepatitis intervention project and increase hepatitis B screening and treatment;
- Sharp Grossmont Hospital Senior Resource Center in La Mesa received a $140,000 grant for technology for outreach to seniors age 65 and over, as well as their caregivers, throughout East San Diego County;
- Women's Community Clinic of San Francisco received a $164,360 grant to help provide free reproductive health services, health training programs, and technology upgrades.

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