

# Health Department

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## Â Primary Care Services Offered in 39 County Health Departments Starting January 3 Safety Net Expansion Provides Medical Assistance and Care Options to Tennessee's Uninsured

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By January 3, 2006, 39 county health departments will be offering an expanded list of adult primary care services to uninsured residents of Tennessee, with eight more counties scheduled for implementation later in the year. The expanded services, which surpass the implementation goal and quantity set forth by the Governor's Safety Net Task Force, are a result of funding to strengthen the state's health care safety net, ultimately helping those disenrolled by TennCare as well as the approximate 580,000 Tennesseans who are without health insurance. Basic medical services will be offered on a sliding fee scale based on income, with a \$5 minimum fee for each visit.

"Now that we have regained control of TennCare we can turn our attention to the very real problem of the uninsured in Tennessee," said Governor Bredesen. "Safety net investments that increase access to primary care services for uninsured and underinsured Tennesseans are some of the most important we can make."

As of December, of the counties scheduled for new or expanded primary care, implementation or expansion had occurred in the following eight counties: Anderson, Carter, Cheatham, Greene, Hawkins, Putnam, Roane and Washington. Thirty-one more counties will begin offering services January 3, 2006. Because of the regional structure of public health and primary care services, some health professionals will provide primary care services in multiple counties. Four counties were appropriated \$1 million each for new facilities for primary care.

In addition to services previously offered, the clinics will provide treatment of acute illnesses and management of chronic diseases. The health departments will also offer basic lab services and a limited pharmacy; however, no narcotics will be maintained at the health department site.

"A strong public health system and safety net is paramount to the health and well-being of a state's citizens," said Health Commissioner Kenneth S. Robinson, M.D. "Employees of the Department of Health have worked diligently to make these services available as soon as possible to enhance the offering of primary care across the state. These services, coupled with innovative funding to federally-qualified health centers, and faith-based and rural health clinics, are examples of the Governor's and Legislature's efforts to improve the health care safety net that has fallen into disrepair during the last several years."

Beyond the new adult primary care services, the county health departments will continue to offer the following services: for children " immunizations, Well Child/EPSTD screens, WIC nutrition services and children's special services care coordination; for adults " breast and cervical cancer screening, family planning services, HIV counseling and testing and communicable disease control.

In addition to expanding access to care for Tennessee's uninsured, the Governor's Safety Net Task Force offers transitional assistance programs for TennCare disenrollees including prescription assistance, insulin and diabetic supplies, mental health services and a variety of programs for special populations.

Those interested in making an appointment at a health department location or needing more information about the availability of services should call the closest county health department. A complete list is available on the DOH Web site at <http://www2.state.tn.us/health/LocalDepts/index.html>.

For more information on primary care resources or other services of the Governor's Safety Net Task Force call the Health Options Hotline 1-888-486-9355 or visit [www.TNHealthOptions.com](http://www.TNHealthOptions.com)