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Hughes: Community health centers are vital

AUGUST 12, 2010

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If you are among the skeptics who wonder about the impact of health reform, imagine this: You are sick with a cough and fever. Where do you go if you've lost your health insurance along with your job? Here's where health reform enters the picture.

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You might be one of the 16 million Americans eligible for Medicaid under the new law. If not, the law makes it easier to purchase affordable insurance and even walk into a local Community Health Center where primary care services are provided whether you have insurance or not.

Now more people will have both insurance coverage and places to go for care - two critical components of staying healthy. A key provision of reform expands the national network of Community Health Centers and provides better quality and lower costs. That is why this week - National Health Center Week 2010 - is different than any other.

Our theme, "Turning Vision into Reality," reflects the task before us. Change is coming and health centers are charged with leading the way. This important law placed trust and confidence in our model of care. It is up to us to define the future of primary care and demonstrate how it should be directed, paid for and delivered with quality, innovation and excellence.

At Michigan Community Health Centers, residents experience a whole health approach and are treated with respect. This is what health care should be: treat people with good, preventive care before they get sick. The benefits are immediate. Local hospital emergency rooms are free to focus on saving lives; and the cost load is lightened for consumers, taxpayers, and governments. Public health improves when affordable health care is open to more people. The health-center model operates with a community approach that has





DANA

Hughes






is communications manager of the Michigan Primary Care Association.

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been successful for 45 years. You can see for yourself at any of the 160-plus sites operated by a Michigan Community Health Center. Their doors are open no matter who you are, where you live, how much money you make, and even if you don't have health insurance.

At Community Health Centers, the mission to transform health care has already started - for the good health of everyone.

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