

The Oregonian

Oregon health clinics get cash transfusion

Providers will split about \$6 million to help the poor

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Multnomah County's health clinics will be able to care for 5,500 more people, thanks to an infusion of cash from federal stimulus funds.

The county joins 24 other health providers in Portland and statewide that are sharing roughly \$6 million in federal stimulus money so they can serve more people during the recession.

Congress designated \$337 million of the \$787 billion stimulus package for community health centers to help the increasing number of people left poor and uninsured by the economy.

Multnomah County was the state's biggest recipient of stimulus funds, getting \$427,000 and the promise of another \$427,000 next year.

Health Department leaders told county commissioners the money will let them hire 18 doctors, nurses or staffers to care for more patients. Last year, the six county-run primary care clinics, along with disease-specific clinics and 13 school health centers, cared for about 66,500 people. The primary care clinics are at capacity and have been turning some patients away.

The new employees will work at three county clinics that need extra staff.

Multnomah County health officials say they also plan to apply for about \$2 million to renovate clinics and upgrade equipment. And they'll spend money on other tasks including making more health records electronic and trying to prevent chronic disease.

Clackamas County is also getting stimulus money, more than \$286,000, to support its Community Health division.

Other big recipients of local health care stimulus funds include Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center in Cornelius, which will get almost \$485,000; the Native American Rehabilitation Association of the Northwest, getting nearly \$167,000; and two Portland homeless-service agencies: Outside In, which gets more than \$253,000 to help homeless youths, and Central City Concern, getting nearly \$187,000.