

No job, insurance: Where do I turn for health care?

With unemployment and underemployment hitting record highs, an ever growing number of people are losing their health insurance as the majority receives it through their employer. The loss of health insurance not only impacts these people, but their families as well. Losing a job is horrible, but losing health insurance can be devastating, especially when illness sets in and leads to financial ruin.

All too often people delay seeking health care when they lose their jobs and health insurance, even when they know they are ill. This is done as a way to save money, until they are so sick that they need more intensive and expensive health-care services. It is also not uncommon for people to access the most expensive form of outpatient healthcare services first, the emergency room, as a way to receive care now and pay for it later. The problems with these approaches are that it puts one's life in unnecessary jeopardy, and can create undue financial strain on the family budget.

So where can one turn to for affordable healthcare services? If you live in Charlotte County there is a health safety net ready to serve you already. The Charlotte County Health Department has health care staff located in three parts of the county ready to serve you. We offer a wide variety of primary healthcare services for adults and children. These services include well-visits, sick-visits, family planning, women's health, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases and more. The cost of services is based on a sliding scale fee determined by income, and we also accept private insurance and Medicaid. Everyone is eligible for our services.

We also provide free immunizations for children under 18 years old. Furthermore, all health department clients participating in our family planning program are eligible for free birth control methods including birth control pills, Depo Provera, diaphragms, condoms and more. This can translate into the savings of hundreds of dollars a year.

Women, Infant, and Children's Nutrition Supplemental program is available to those who financially qualify. Pregnant women and families with young children are invited to contact us for more information. Our goal is to have healthy mothers, infants, and children.

During tough financial times, no one in this county has to go without primary care services. The Charlotte County Health Department is here to serve. If you have never tried us, but are in need of our services, I encourage you to call and speak to one of our friendly staff or surf to our easy to navigate Web site at www.CharlotteCHD.com. We understand that many people in Charlotte County are struggling during these tough economic times, and we are doing our best to accommodate as many people as possible in our modern health-care facilities. Give us a try and see how we can help. I think you will be pleasantly surprised by what you find when you visit one of our three facilities and meet our highly qualified and friendly health care team. We look forward to partnering with you in your health care. You may reach us at our clinics in Punta Gorda 941-639-1181, Port Charlotte 941-613-0950, and Englewood 941-474-3240.



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