

## Health reforms ignore Valley

### Group offers ideas to improve on proposals from state government.

By Denny Boyles / The Fresno Bee

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Researchers at Fresno State said Thursday that proposed state health reforms ignore issues vital to Central Valley residents.

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The group, from the Central Valley Health Policy Institute at California State University, Fresno, offered 11 recommendations to improve numerous proposals working their way through state government. Those recommendations range from respecting cultural and language differences, to ensuring that access and overall coverage improve without significant cost increases.

"Health Reform 2007: Impact on the Valley" is available online at [www.csufresno.edu/ccchhs/documents/CVHPI\\_brief\\_062007.pdf](http://www.csufresno.edu/ccchhs/documents/CVHPI_brief_062007.pdf).

The report, "Health Reform 2007: Impact on the Valley," highlights Gov. Schwarzenegger's proposal, as well as four bills in review by state lawmakers and a reform package written by the Assembly Republican Caucus.

Researchers examined those proposals and realized there was something missing, said Dr. John Capitman, executive director of the Institute.

"When we talk to people, the same issues always come up," Capitman said.

"The problem is, none of the proposals adequately address these issues that are of such concern to the Valley."

Those concerns include demographics such as racial or ethnic diversity, large numbers of poor residents, high unemployment and large numbers of undocumented residents.

There are also access-related concerns such as the disproportionate number of publicly insured or uninsured residents in the Valley, and a shortage of health professionals.

While no plan is likely to solve all of those problems, Capitman said, the authors of the study hope that by highlighting local issues, they can make some changes for the better.

"We realized that with a few recommended changes, those concerns could be addressed," Capitman said.

Among the suggestions in the report is a proposal to allow seasonal employers, such as farmers, to contract with federally qualified health clinics or other safety-net providers to provide care for those workers.

"That's a really exciting idea," Capitman said. "It's a new way of looking at that problem."

The report is the first comprehensive effort in the Valley to examine how the various health-care reform efforts would affect local residents, said Brandie Campbell, spokeswoman for the institute.

Campbell said the report is the result of several discussion sessions held with residents and researchers.

"This is actually the first time that we've been able to gather feedback from all of the discussions and formulate a voice for what the Valley's needs and challenges are," she said. "This is also the first time that we've formulated key recommendations that will serve as a resource in this heated debate on health-care reform for the Valley."

The next step, according to Capitman, is to receive feedback from the officials and other groups who received the report.

"The health-care reform debate is really set to heat up in the next month," Capitman said. "Hopefully we'll get some feedback from the report. People may not agree with all of our recommendations, but hopefully some of the ideas can be incorporated into proposals." The reporter can be reached at [dboyles@fresnobee.com](mailto:dboyles@fresnobee.com) or (559) 441-6659.

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