



Clinic awaits county vote on \$250,000

By DANNY BERNARDINI/The Reporter, Vacaville

Article Launched: 06/09/2008 07:15:45 AM PDT

The Solano County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday will consider spending \$250,000 on a new primary health clinic for low-income residents in Vallejo and \$64,000 more to help pay for the care of children using it.

Staff members are recommending that the board approve the money for La Clinica de la Raza, saying it will help provide more access to health care for low-income residents and the under-insured.

Since 2002, La Clinica has been providing primary care services; it expanded in 2006 to include the Great Beginnings prenatal clinic near Sutter Solano Hospital in Vallejo. The agency now wants to build a new clinic at the same site to help with the rising numbers of patients seeking medical aid.

The \$250,000 would be a one-time payment. If the board approves the spending, the county would join Kaiser Permanente and Sutter Solano as major backers of the clinic. Each hospital has pledged to donate \$100,000 for three years to help with La Clinica's operational costs.

The county also will vote on whether to contract with the Solano Coalition for Better Health for \$64,025 in additional premiums under the Healthy Kids Insurance program.

The county set aside \$200,000 in the 2007-08 budget for the expansion of the Smile in Style program under the Department of Public Health. There have been delays in acquiring equipment and other problems with that program, however, so the staff favors using the money for La Clinica instead.

The remaining \$50,000 would come from unspent 2007-08 money collected as the county's share of a national settlement with tobacco companies.

The discussion about providing more access to health care comes at a time when Solano County is reporting a 13.1 percent rise in emergency room visits over the last seven years. That is twice the statewide average, according to staff reports.

Of those visits, nearly 80 percent would be classified as non-urgent or urgent with moderate severity. According to staff reports, a primary care center could have provided treatment in many of those instances.

Of the 61,000 emergency room visits to Sutter and Kaiser, 18 percent of Sutter's visits and 11 percent of Kaiser's were by low-income residents.

The supervisors meet Tuesday at 675 Texas St., Fairfield.