



WWW.LSUHOSPITALS.ORG

- BOGALUSA MEDICAL CENTER - BOGALUSA
- EARL K. LONG MEDICAL CENTER - BATON ROUGE
- LALLIE KEMP REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER - INDEPENDENCE
- LEONARD J. CHABERT MEDICAL CENTER - HOUMA
- LSU INTERIM HOSPITAL - NEW ORLEANS
- UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER - LAFAYETTE
- W.O. MOSS REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER - LAKE CHARLES

IN THE NEWS

[[HTTP://WWW.LSUHOSPITALS.ORG/MEDIA-RELATIONS/IN-THE-NEWS.HTM](http://www.lsuhs.org/media-relations/in-the-news.htm)]

[FRIDAY, AUGUST 10, 2007]

La. gets \$100 million grant for clinic care
The Associated Press | 08.09.07

Letter: Build veterans hospital at Gonzales
The Advocate | 08.10.07

LaCHIP, vaccines get push for school
The Advocate | 08.10.07

Parkland fighting cheaters
Dallas Morning News | 08.10.07

10,000 legislators conference in N.O. in 2008
New Orleans CityBusiness | 08.10.07

La. gets \$100 million grant for clinic care
The Associated Press | 08.09.07

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Community clinics in the New Orleans area struggling to stay open after Hurricane Katrina or hoping to expand services can tap into a new \$100 million federal grant awarded to the state, the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals announced Thursday.

The grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services covers medical care, dental and eye care, mental health services and substance abuse treatment. Existing clinics in Jefferson, Orleans, St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes are eligible for the dollars.

At least \$4 million of the grant is set aside for the New Orleans health department to expand care and to recruit doctors, nurses, dentists and other health care workers for new clinic sites planned for eastern New Orleans and Mandeville, according to DHH.

"This money will allow us to increase our capacity to serve people who have returned to New Orleans but are having difficulty getting health care services," DHH Secretary Fred Cerise said in a statement. "The goal is not only to expand services, but also to ensure these services are sustainable once the grant funding has expired."

The grant money will help advance a state health department plan to create "medical homes" in New Orleans for those who depend on the state for health services, both uninsured or recipients in the state's Medicaid program.

A "medical home" is a community clinic, health center or other neighborhood health care facility that would refer patients to specialists, manage disease care and provide a system for tracking the care and medications that patients receive.

<http://www.nola.com/newsflash/louisiana/index.ssf?/base/news-33/1186698248135250.xml&storylist=louisiana>

[\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)

Letter: Build veterans hospital at Gonzales
The Advocate | 08.10.07

I believe all veterans of Louisiana could be better served if our new Veterans Affairs hospital can be located at the Gonzales mall area near Interstate 10.

The old hospital was built in downtown New Orleans because it had access to air, train, bus and political clout. Automobiles changed all the reasons to build in New Orleans today, except politics.

Land in Gonzales would be easier to buy and cheaper. A campus hospital would be better, and facilities could be arranged for better service. Parking and traffic flow is and will continue to be better than in New Orleans. There are just as many veterans in the Baton Rouge area as in New Orleans.

Here is what politicians don't consider:

Veterans and families are getting older, and crime is out of control in New Orleans. I cite Louisiana State Police and National Guard presence with no indication when they may leave. Flooding can happen again. Traffic and parking will still be terrible. Obtaining land and demolition of old buildings will take years to do before the first shovel of dirt is turned over.

Our politicians promised these younger Iraq and Afghanistan veterans the best medical care close to home. Guess what? They have to go to Jackson, Miss., or Houston, most without family, to get into a hospital.

The Department of Veterans Affairs tells me after 2012-plus the new hospital will see its first veteran. I say it is shameful how we wait on the state when the money is there to do what we promised and build a veterans hospital not shared with the state charity system.

If you agree with me, e-mail all your politicians and tell them to build where veterans will have first-class care, not where the politicians want votes.

You build it, and the doctors-in-training can drive to it, probably faster than to downtown New Orleans.

Frank Gilbert
retired equipment inspector,
Vietnam helicopter pilot
Gibson

<http://www.2theadvocate.com/opinion/9078306.html>

[\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)

LaCHIP, vaccines get push for school **The Advocate | 08.10.07**

By MARSHA SHULER
Advocate Capitol News Bureau

It's back-to-school time.

It's time to think vaccines and health insurance for children.

That's the word going out from state health officials.

Parents or guardians are getting information about how to get their children signed up for the free Louisiana Children's Health Insurance Program at back-to-school fairs and other events.

Youngsters will also be bringing information home from school about LaCHIP. The program provides insurance for children in homes where income is up to double the federal poverty level. That's \$41,300 for a family of four.

Meanwhile, parents are being reminded of vaccination requirements for school attendance. State law requires children to have completed a series of shots before they can enter school to guard against a variety of diseases including mumps, measles and rubella, Hepatitis B and diphtheria.

Area parish health units will be open and providing immunizations every weekday. No appointments are necessary and walk-ins are welcome, clinic officials said.

"There is no better time to focus on health-care priorities for children than when they head back to school in the fall," state Department of Health and Hospitals Secretary Dr. Fred Cerise said.

Deputy Medicaid director Ruth Kennedy said a recent survey shows that children without insurance coverage are less likely to get their required vaccines for school.

About 91,000 Louisiana children have no health insurance, she said. Based on family income, roughly 75 percent of them qualify for government funded insurance.

A major state push comes each year in conjunction with back-to-school, said Kennedy, whose office oversees LaCHIP.

"Every year our enrollment increases dramatically after we send fliers home with the children with the number to call," Kennedy said.

Kennedy said the LaCHIP hot line (877-252-2447) will be open for extended hours to handle what is expected to be thousands of telephone calls from parents seeking more information.

Hot line hours will run from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday — 2% hours longer than normal. And the hot line will be open on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. until Sept. 8.

[\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)

"There are thousands of families who have no idea this program exists," Kennedy said. The situation exists in spite of a nationally recognized outreach effort, she said.

Kennedy said the greatest percentage of uninsured children live in households with income between 50 percent and 100 percent of the poverty level. Poverty level for a family of four is \$20,650 annually.

LaCHIP is an expansion of the regular Medicaid program, the government insurance for the poor.

Kennedy said many of the children, who are uninsured, are probably eligible for insurance coverage through the regular Medicaid program. They are identified through the LaCHIP effort.

In August and September, LaCHIP will be pushed at some 40 events around the state.

Information will be available at three scheduled events Saturday: Back to School Event with Metro Councilman Byron Sharper, Capital Middle School, 5100 Greenwell Springs Road, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.; a Healthy Family Fun Day/Back to School Uniform Giveaway, Family Road of Greater Baton Rouge, 323 E. Airport Ave., noon to 4 p.m.; and LaCHIP Back to School Enrollment Event, MICA Uniforms, 4329 Airline Hwy., 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

<http://www.theadvocate.com/news/9079541.html?showAll=y&c=y>

[\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)

Parkland fighting cheaters **Dallas Morning News | 08.10.07**

220 patients accused of lying about residency, income to get charity care
By KIM BREEN and SHERRY JACOBSON

Three hospitals in three counties turned Wendy Devineni away last year as she sought relief from the rare disorder that left her bedridden with headaches and vertigo.

Uninsured and desperate for spinal surgery, the Denton County woman lied about where she lived to qualify for charity care at Dallas' Parkland Memorial Hospital, whose primary mission is to provide indigent health care.

"When you're faced with the health problems that I was having and you're at the last straw, you're going to fight for your life," said Mrs. Devineni, who is 32.

But now that lie has come back to haunt her, and Parkland wants her to pay.

She is one of the first 220 patients under investigation on allegations of defrauding the hospital – and Dallas County taxpayers – by lying about where they lived or how much money they earned so they could get charity care.

After decades of having to look the other way, the hospital now has the tools to catch dishonest patients – including software that tracks financial information and addresses, and investigators who work full-time building fraud cases.

"The majority of it's a paper trail," said Lt. Rick Roebuck of the Dallas County Hospital District police force. "But there have been times when we've gone out, knocked on doors, and sat in the road and watched" to see where people lived and worked.

The first time the hospital used the technology to analyze patients enrolled in Parkland Health Plus, its charity care program, it flagged 12,000 cases of potential abuse.

Dallas County's elected leaders have been pressuring Parkland to do a better job of identifying patients who could afford to pay for their care; especially those who are middle-class and living in neighboring counties. Last year, local taxpayers were forced to pay about \$25.2 million for out-of-county residents treated at Parkland.

Since last August, more than a dozen people have pleaded guilty to felony or misdemeanor charges, and agreed to pay their full hospital bills. Because most of the defendants have never been in trouble before, they received deferred adjudication. In such cases, a defendant doesn't have a conviction if probation is completed.

The hospital has received \$228,535 in restitution payments so far from those and other pending cases. Full restitution on cleared and pending cases is expected to exceed \$1.3 million.

Egregious deceit

[\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)

Several are egregious examples of deceit, officials said, including a Southlake businessman who claimed to make just \$8 an hour at a Subway sandwich shop, but in reality owned nine franchises. He also lived in a \$500,000 house and drove a Mercedes, officials said.

He and his wife racked up \$46,800 in charity care and paid it in full when caught. Neither could be reached for comment.

An Allen woman who owned a successful motel near Winstar Casinos in Oklahoma also claimed \$119,000 worth of charity care, officials said. Her son said she was seeking treatment for breast cancer and had nowhere else to go. Officials said she wrote a check for \$20,000 when she was caught.

"What we are trying to target are those people who demonstratively are defrauding the system because they have income and assets and businesses that they are not reporting," said Lincoln Monroe, a Dallas County assistant district attorney who is prosecuting the Parkland cases. He said the county is sending a message to people who might be tempted to deceive Dallas' charity hospital.

"To the residents of North Texas – if you defraud Dallas County, Dallas County will actively prosecute you," Mr. Monroe said.

"We do not want to make criminals out of noncriminals, but we do want people who have the ability to pay and are abusing the system to be held accountable."

Parkland does not turn away patients in need of immediate medical care, but it also must discern who is indigent and who is not. Along with finances and residency status, Parkland checks to see if patients wanting charity care have access to private health insurance.

Mr. Monroe noted that many small business owners choose not to provide insurance and instead direct employees to receive care at Parkland.

"There are businesses that do that, who openly make a choice, and that's not fair to the other citizens of Dallas County," he said.

Officials say the first patients who have been prosecuted share common backgrounds – most of them are middle-class, small business owners from Middle Eastern countries. They live in neighboring counties but claimed to live in Dallas County, sometimes using a business address as a home address. Several of the defendants are related or know each other, and investigators said they learned from their ethnic communities how to get into Parkland without paying.

"That is something that we have noticed," Lt. Roebuck said. "It is a lot of times a group of people or a certain community where they learn that this can occur."

An Allen businessman who spoke on the condition he not be identified said he and his wife went to Parkland because they had no insurance and a client told him he could get free care there. "I don't understand the American regulations," said the man, who was from Iran and was treated at Parkland for a brain tumor. His wife suffers from multiple sclerosis. Together, their hospital bills totaled more than \$102,000.

[\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)

They put a second mortgage on their house to pay the bill.

"Sometimes I go to Parkland now, but I pay cash," he said. He said he is now charged \$140 to see a specialist, \$1,750 for an MRI and up to \$700 for lab work.

Nowhere else to go

Some of the targeted patients said they had nowhere in their own county to turn. In North Texas, only Tarrant and Dallas counties have tax-supported public hospitals, leaving few options for indigent and uninsured residents.

A Kaufman County woman, who also agreed to tell her story as long as she wasn't identified, said employees at a county clinic directed her to Parkland when she needed specialty care after a test indicated she could have ovarian cancer.

She provided a relative's Dallas County address as her own and was later caught. She said she is unemployed and uninsured and takes care of her disabled son. Cancer is common in her family, and her mother died from the disease.

"I'm sorry, but I did what I had to do to take care of my son," she said.

"I regret what I did, but any strong-willed mother would do this, I believe, in order to take care of her family."

She borrowed from her sister to pay the \$3,537 bill.

About 80,000 patients are enrolled in Parkland Health Plus, which is paid for with county tax dollars. "We use the PHP as a payer of last resort," said Bob Reed, director of patient access at Parkland. Patients are also screened to see if they are eligible for other funding, such as Medicaid.

To qualify for PHP, patients can earn no more than 200 percent of the federal poverty level, or \$41,300 a year for a family of four.

Patients are required to bring in documents to indicate where they live and how much they earn. In the past, it was difficult to detect dishonesty.

"What they showed us is what we believed," Mr. Reed said.

Better screening

But since 2005, patients seeking PHP enrollment are screened immediately during the application process using a national database. Addresses are verified, and if some parts of the application raise red flags, finances are checked as well.

"These tools give us the ability to ask reasonable questions," Mr. Reed said.

If someone claims to have no income, for example, a screener can now ask, "How do you have this auto loan?" said Beth Keating, financial counseling manager at Parkland.

[\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)

Screening is now much more thorough, and people who are not eligible are prevented from getting into PHP, she said.

"I think we're doing a very good job of being responsible stewards of the county's taxpayers' dollars," Ms. Keating said.

Patients are also caught deceiving the system when they, for example, pay for a prescription with an out-of-county check. Sometimes, people are turned in by neighbors and exes, said Graciela Escobar, financial counseling supervisor.

That's how Wendy Devineni believes she was caught.

She said her saga at Parkland started last August, when she tried to get into the public hospital the legal way. But after admitting she lived in Denton County, hospital officials said she could only have the surgery if she paid for it, starting with a \$20,000 down payment.

"It might as well have been a million dollars," said her husband, Hari Devineni, who last year earned about \$25,000 running a Carrollton transmission shop. Mrs. Devineni is unemployed.

The surgery involved removing about four inches of her skull that was pressing on the top of Mrs. Devineni's spinal column. It could only be performed by a doctor specially trained in neurology and spinal surgery, and her research showed that there were two such doctors at Parkland.

Residency rule

The Devinenis recall that social workers told them repeatedly that she needed to be a Dallas County resident to qualify for care at Parkland.

"It was, 'Just get a residence, get a Dallas address,' " she said.

So they rented a house in Carrollton, paying an acquaintance \$800 for one month, and turned on the utilities. Mrs. Devineni said she brought the lease agreement and utility receipt to Parkland, and within two months, doctors performed the surgery.

"After my surgery, I never went back to that hospital," she said. "I never had any prescription filled through them, I never went through any follow-up appointment, I didn't even go back to remove my stitches. I did not want to utilize anything other than what I had to, because we were afraid something like this might happen."

Mrs. Devineni said she wishes she had actually lived in the house, but never did, because it would have disrupted her family and she was too sick to handle the move.

Early this year, she got a call from an ex-husband saying Parkland was asking questions about where she lived. He told the hospital that she had never moved from Little Elm to Dallas County.

[\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)

Later, Parkland informed Mrs. Devineni's lawyer that she owes \$26,000. She has not yet been charged, but her case is under investigation. She hopes to avoid prosecution by setting up a payment plan.

Cases are not prosecuted when the patient has died, if the amount of care is less than \$300, or if records provided clear the patient.

Lt. Roebuck said that for people who are charged with a crime, simply paying what they owe is only part of the equation. They also will be prosecuted, he said.

"We're not debt collectors," Lt. Roebuck said.

"They're taking away from the folks who really need it and are eligible to receive it," he said. "It's not a bottomless pit" of resources, he said.

http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/localnews/stories/DN-parkland_10met.ART.North.Edition1.42e8244.html

[\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)

10,000 legislators conference in N.O. in 2008 New Orleans CityBusiness | 08.10.07

NEW ORLEANS – The National Conference of State Legislatures plans to bring its 2008 Issues Summit to New Orleans next summer.

The July 20-25 conference is expected to bring 10,000 state legislators, family members, staff and others to the city.

The annual meeting is designed to bring together policymakers from across the country and world to discuss common challenges faced by states and possible solutions.

Conference topics include education, health care, state budgets, homeland security, infrastructure, the environment and energy.

This year's meeting, which began Saturday and ends today, was held in Boston. More than 9,000 people attended.

The Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau estimates the conference brought in more than \$20 million from tourists and more than 24,000 hotel nights were sold.

A group of Louisiana lawmakers attended the Boston summit to promote the New Orleans conference. At the conference, Louisiana officials played host to a Louisiana hospitality event highlighting the state's culture and cuisine to encourage attendance at next year's summit.

<http://www.neworleanscitybusiness.com/UpToTheMinute.cfm?recID=12188>

[\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)