



NEWS RELEASE

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County leaders to address improving community health in a changing environment

WASHINGTON, D.C. – More than 120 county leaders from across the country are meeting in San Diego County, Calif. this week to explore new opportunities for counties to improve both community and employee health in the era of national health reform.

“[Improving Health in a Climate of Change](#),” sponsored by the National Association of Counties (NACO) and San Diego County, will bring nationally renowned health care system experts together with state and county government leaders to discuss many health care delivery issues facing counties.

The one-and-a-half-day forum, Jan. 30-31, is being offered as part of NACO's [Healthy Counties Initiative](#), which supports innovative public-private partnerships within the many areas of health that counties are involved with and highlights county health best practices. The Healthy Counties Advisory Board is chaired by Jim McDonough, commissioner, Ramsey County, Minn.

Issues to be discussed include how some counties are using the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to create and maintain Accountable Care Communities (ACCs). This model of care permits counties to align and prioritize the needs of their residents and employees to prevent disease and reduce health care costs.

Other issues to be discussed include strategies for serving individuals living with mental illness and substance use disorders, engaging federal and state partners, health cost drivers and how employee wellness programs can be used to drive and sustain a healthier community.

Special guest speakers include Nadine Simons, regional health administrator, Region IX, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Angelica Baltazar, health and human services specialist, Esri; Paul Campbell, vice president, state and local solutions, UnitedHealthcare; Barbara Lee, medical services administrator, San Diego County Sheriff's

Department; Charles Ingoglia, senior vice president, National Council for Behavioral Health; Marianne Burdison, senior director, Strategic Alliances and Development, Cenpatico; Clint MacKinney, M.D., M.S., deputy director, Rural Policy Research Institute Center, University of Iowa; Marie Brown-Mercadel, deputy director, East and North Central Regions, HHS, San Diego County, Calif.

The full [meeting agenda](#) is available on the NACo website.

Counties are a critical part of the country's health care system. Counties provide public health information and services, clinical services, behavioral health services, children's care and services to the elderly, emergency medical services and various healthy living programs. Often, states require counties to provide health services to low-income and uninsured people. County governments have different responsibilities and requirements in providing health care services, with some counties deeply involved in delivering health services to their residents through county hospitals and county health departments.

County governments actively support the health care providers in their jurisdiction. Counties invest \$69.7 billion annually in public health services and hospital facilities providing in-patient medical care. From preventative measures like administering flu shots to educating the public on health issues, counties are involved in providing healthcare through more than 1,550 health departments.

County health departments regulate the use of safe ingredients and clean preparation methods in restaurants and ensure the cleanest and safest operating standards for community swimming pools and hotels. Counties support 960 hospitals that provide clinical services, cancer and cardiac care, and emergency and trauma care, serving more than 14 million patient days annually. By operating 76 percent of publicly owned nursing homes nationally, counties promote quality of life and wellness to the elderly.

More information about [Why Counties Matter](#) is available on the NACo website or by contacting [Jim Philipps](#) at 202.942.4220.

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The [National Association of Counties](#) (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo assists America's 3,069 counties in pursuing excellence in public service to produce healthy, vibrant, safe and resilient counties. NACo promotes sound public policies, fosters county solutions and innovation, promotes intergovernmental and public-private collaboration and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. More information at: www.naco.org.