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Oakley clinic opens for low-income patients

By Rowena Coetsee
 Contra Costa Times
 Posted: 11/30/2011 02:35:49 PM PST
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The equipment has arrived and the exam rooms are ready for a long-awaited clinic that's opening Friday in Oakley.

Residents with little or no insurance will be able to get basic medical care at the storefront facility that the Oakland-based nonprofit organization La Clinica will operate.

Located in one corner of the Raley's shopping center, the clinic is next to a dry cleaner's and across the parking lot from a Taco Bell restaurant.

Although home to more than 35,000 residents, Oakley is the only city in East Contra Costa, which until now, has been without a facility to provide basic medical care for those with inadequate or no health insurance. The city lost its only doctor in 2009.

By the start of this week, five of the new clinic's exam rooms were fully furnished, the refrigerators for vaccines had arrived, and the autoclaves for sterilizing instruments were in place.

A doctor and medical assistant will staff the clinic along with three other employees, including a human services specialist who will register patients and help them apply for other social services that might supplement their care.

Four of the five employees are fluent Spanish speakers and the doctor, who also works at La Clinica's Pittsburg clinic, is "very adequate" in the language, said Clinic Manager Laura Martinez.

As of Monday, nine families had preregistered for services, and the clinic is expecting to see as many as 20 patients on Friday,

she said.

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Although the clinic at first will be open only 20 hours a week, that schedule probably will expand within a year, said Anita Addison, chief of planning and strategic advancement.

La Clinica expects to hire a second health provider -- probably a nurse practitioner -- in spring 2012, Martinez added, and as the patient base grows all nine exam rooms might be needed.

In time, the goal is to adopt an electronic health records system for not only the Oakley clinic but La Clinica's 26 other sites as well, storing patient charts on computer so doctors anywhere in the system can call up medical histories immediately, Addison said.

Oakley's facility eventually might add dental and prenatal care to its menu, services that patients currently can get at the Pittsburg site.

For now, however, the doctor and her assistant will be caring for people with the flu and chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and asthma, giving routine physical checkups, administering vaccines, and helping couples with family planning.

"We're so excited to finally be here," Addison said. "It's been a labor of love, a very long effort. We can't wait to open our doors."


Contact Rowena Coetsee at 925-779-7141.


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When: 3 to 7 p.m. weekdays
Where: 2021 Main St. (Raley's supermarket shopping center)
Info: 925-776-8240. Patients should call ahead for details because they must bring certain documents with them to sign up, including photo identification along with proof of address and income.

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