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## California readies \$37 million Obamacare public relations effort

### Four dozen groups receive grants for local education, outreach efforts

By Barbara Jones

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Funded by \$37 million in state grants, four dozen diverse groups from around California -- including labor unions, civil-rights advocates, medical clinics and the Los Angeles Unified School District -- are preparing launch education programs promoting Obamacare, the national health-care plan set to take effect in Janu

The 48 recipients were selected from about 200 that applied for the grants, chosen for their access and a to reach the estimated 5.3 million Californians in underserved communities who will be eligible for the sub: or guaranteed health coverage.

"These organizations are well-established and well-known and trusted in their communities," said Larry H spokesman for Covered California, the state agency established to oversee a marketplace of insurance carriers. "They'll take a more personal approach in explaining the programs and offerings through our hea insurance exchange."

Covered California has tentatively chosen 13 commercial health plans to offer guaranteed coverage under federal Affordable Care Act, commonly known as Obamacare. With enrollment opening Oct. 1, the agenc hopes to get the outreach efforts started in the next few weeks.

"We're taking a very targeted approach," Hicks said. "We looked at characteristics like ethnicity, language region and age, then partnered with

organizations to reach out to those demograp

Cal State L.A. received \$1.25 million to reach students at all CSU campuses, while the Unive of California got \$1 million for its statewide campaign.

Of the \$37 million total, groups serving metro Los Angeles received almost \$16 million. That includes the Los Angeles County Federation o Labor, which was awarded \$1 million for an campaign that will extend to San Bernardino a Orange counties, and the Actors Fund, which

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Loma Linda University Medical Center was awarded \$990,000, while the San Bernardino Employment and Training Agency got \$750,000. Ventura County Public Health received \$700,000 to reach out to local Latino residents.

With its grant of \$250,000, the nonprofit Valle Community Clinic in North Hollywood will take message to farmers markets and athletic field places where working-class families often congregate -- as well as state employment offices and its own waiting rooms.

"People need to know they can get coverage themselves and for their families," said Olga [redacted] the clinic's director of patient services. "They [redacted] have ongoing coverage with preventative care just acute care at an emergency room. We can get up close and personal to guide them through the

process ... help get them an understanding of the world they're entering into and to facilitate that process

Covered California is finalizing its contract with Los Angeles Unified, which has been tapped to receive \$990,000 to connect with students and families in the nation's second-largest school district.

Dr. Kimberly Uyeda, LAUSD's director of Student Medical Services, said information will be presented to students in the adult-ed division, which offers English-language, high school equivalency and vocational-training classes.

In addition, younger students who belong to after-school clubs with a health or medical focus will be trained to convey information about the insurance-plan options to their families.

The grant money will help pay the salaries of district employees who are already working to coordinate health and social services for students. "We'll be pulling from well-trained and skilled staff members who can reach this outreach plan," Uyeda said.

Conservative bloggers have blasted LAUSD's plan to use students as "messengers" for President Obama's health-care reforms, but Uyeda insisted that any participation will be voluntary. "This is never going to be part of the curriculum or regular education," she said. "It would never be mandatory."

Hicks said Covered California will closely monitor the groups to ensure they're spending the money appropriately and meeting their goals. Under guidelines for the grants, those receiving \$750,000 must make contact with at least 99,000 people. A \$1 million award raises that target to 132,450 people.

Covered California also plans to advertise its insurance exchange in television and radio commercials beginning later this summer, with detailed information available on its website, [coveredca.com](http://coveredca.com).

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