



## ***VIDA PILOT PROJECT: FACT SHEET***

VIDA is a health care access and community empowerment project that has been established through a partnership of Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County ("NLS") and LA Metro-IAF ("LA Metro"). The California Endowment ("TCE") initially supported VIDA through a planning grant, followed by a three-year pilot grant. In July 2001, TCE approved an additional and expanded three-year award to enable the VIDA pilot to build on lessons learned and expands beyond the Northeast San Fernando Valley into the San Gabriel Valley.

VIDA grew out of the great fear in the immigrant community of using health care and its impact on immigration status ("public charge"). The majority of VIDA participants are Hispanic immigrant families who are "working poor." Before VIDA, many reported that they had trouble finding and getting care they could afford, and when they found providers, many did not believe they would be respected or even that they would receive timely high quality care. Following implementation of VIDA, the percentage of participants who reported that they have a regular source of health care nearly doubled, from 42% to 80%. The percentage that reported that they have "no place to go" dropped dramatically, from 30% to less than 10%.

- ***A simplified "front-end":*** LA County has approved the VIDA pilot in the San Fernando Valley to "enroll" up to 1,200 families with incomes below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level ("FPL"). Currently, about 800 families, representing 1,800 individuals, are "enrolled." VIDA participants, with the assistance of community members and leaders from trusted neighborhood institutions, including churches and schools, fill out a simple, one-page self-verified application to become a VIDA participant. There is no asset test for VIDA and no documents are required. VIDA members are given a photo identification card on the spot and can begin receiving no-cost services at any of the 24 public and private ValleyCare providers. While the cost of care would have been free for participants below 133-1/3% of the FPL, the County uses waiver funds to supplement the costs for participants over that level. (Fewer than 10% of the participants fall into this category.) The importance of VIDA,

however, is encouraging participants to find a "medical home" and establish a relationship with a provider in order to obtain preventive care for chronic conditions, such as diabetes and hypertension.

- **Linkage:** Once enrolled in VIDA, participants get help from the Health Consumer Center of Los Angeles ("HCC"), another NLS project funded by TCE, where expert advocates assist participants in applying for Medi-Cal and Healthy Families, and provide necessary intervention for participants whose applications are unnecessarily delayed or denied. Approximately 25% of VIDA participants are eligible for these programs which are critical in bringing in federal and state financing for local safety net providers.
- **Empowerment:** LA-Metro IAF provides leadership training to participants. Regular meetings are held by members to discuss what is "working" and what is not "working." The goal is to help participants to help each other in improving their ability to access health care and to identify barriers that they can address as a community. The current focus is on the following issues: a) feeling "respect" at the local provider sites, including access to interpreter services; b) the long wait times at the emergency room; and c) the threatened cutbacks/closures at the local provider sites. NLS provides technical expertise in analyzing laws, regulations and policies, and together, NLS and LA-Metro IAF identify advocacy opportunities for participants, such as meetings with the press, policymakers, and legislative representatives.
- **Evaluation:** Dr. Michael Cousineau, from the University of Southern California, provides an independent evaluation of the VIDA Pilot. His team reviews patient utilization data, conducts member interviews, and observes participant meetings and leadership training events.
- **San Gabriel Valley:** The expansion in the San Gabriel Valley will focus primarily on supporting the needs of a "health care promoter" project focusing on low-income individuals in specific communities. Citrus Valley Health Partners support this project. VIDA will work to: a) provide in-depth individual assistance on linkage and overcoming other barriers to utilization; b) bring in LA-Metro IAF to provide leadership development; c) provide NLS technical expertise by senior health care policy advocates to support joint work by consumers and providers in protecting the safety net; and d) utilize an evaluation component to track access and utilization.

- ***"Small business" component:*** VIDA has surveyed participants to identify the key economic sectors that provide employment to them. To date, the majority of members do domestic and gardening work. VIDA will work with the evaluator to conduct focus groups of individuals representing the "employers" associated with those sectors in order to pursue discussion of potential policy solutions that may provide feasible alternative insurance coverage. VIDA data regarding utilization may provide insight into the actual costs and affordability of such coverage.

The VIDA Pilot has been a successful attempt to realize the promise of the "We've Got You Covered" approach that help families secure appropriate sources of coverage for care. This approach was developed collaboratively with other advocates and the County of Los Angeles Departments of Public Social Services and Health Services. The emphasis is on utilizing the safety net for preventive care by encouraging participants to find a "medical home" and developing the participants into leaders in their own right, so they can provide a necessary voice in advocating for a strong and improved health care system. We expect information from the VIDA project will help us improve access to and the quality of our County and partner health services, to generate some significant benefits for families who learn about service availability and receive assistance with available coverage options, and will help bring additional financial support and revenue into the County and safety net systems where these families are seeking care.