

For Immediate Release

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Uninsured Data Reveals Health Disparities In the Coachella Valley

(PALM DESERT, CA) – April 5, 2016...A recently released report on adult health in the Coachella Valley shows that nearly 75,000 adults were uninsured in 2013—a figure that has hopefully changed in the years since the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). According to 2013 data from the HARC (Health Assessment and Research for Communities), one-third of Coachella Valley working-age adults were uninsured in 2013.

The data comes from HARC's Coachella Valley community health survey, known as the Community Health Monitor, which is conducted every three years. This particular special report on the health of uninsured adults was made possible by the Desert Healthcare District.

Who are the Uninsured?

The 2013 data revealed that the uninsured in the Coachella Valley tend to be working-age adults who are employed and low-income. Uninsured rates were also the highest among Hispanics/Latinos—a trend that is true for both the Coachella Valley and also the nation.

What are the Consequences?

To no surprise, no health insurance means less healthcare utilization. At the time of the 2013 survey, the uninsured were more likely to have gone five or more years without visiting a healthcare provider, in comparison to those who were insured.

Lack of health insurance also coincided with less access to dental care, eye care, and mental health care. Without available and affordable coverage, the uninsured are less likely to receive preventative health treatments such as cancer screenings, dental cleanings, regular dental care, and cholesterol screenings. For example, only 42.5% of uninsured had their cholesterol checked during the survey year in comparison to 86.3% of those insured.

When uninsured did receive care, they tended to receive care that was less consistent than those who have insurance. For example, those without insurance were more likely to indicate their usual source of care is either a clinic, an emergency room, or they had no usual place for care—suggesting the uninsured lack continuity of care. In comparison, those who have insurance are more likely to indicate they see their regular doctor for care.

Have We Made Progress in the Past Three Years?

HARC is currently collecting data for its fourth Community Health Monitor. Anyone in the Coachella Valley with a phone—landline or cell—has an equal chance of being called to take the survey. The results of this survey—available in January 2017—will help to determine how insurance and healthcare has changed since the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Many local organizations have been busy enrolling Valley residents who were uninsured in Covered California, and thus, HARC expects to see a sharp decline in the number of uninsured adults in the region. Whether that translates to changes in the ability to access services remains to be seen.

Data collection for this survey will be going on until June 2016. Coachella Valley residents who receive a call from HARC's partner Kent State University are encouraged to take the call, and take the time to answer the survey. In less than a year, this will provide updated information on the state of the uninsured in the region, and what we can do to provide care to these individuals.

About HARC

HARC, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing research and evaluation services related to health and wellness. HARC is funded in part by grants, donations, and customized research and evaluation services. HARC is located on the University of California, Riverside Palm Desert campus. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at (760) 404-1945, or visiting the organization's website at www.HARCdata.org.