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## Better Health Care



Yesterday's grand opening of a new LSU healthcare clinic at Frederick Douglass Senior High School in the [Ninth Ward](#) is only the beginning in improving the delivery of health care in the metro area. The high school clinic was partially funded through a \$100 million grant from the Department of Health and Human Services, and there's still plenty of funding available through the grant.

As Gambit Weekly's Sarah Andert first reported in [September](#), the grant funds are to be used to address the area's post-Katrina outpatient primary care needs. Clayton Williams, director of the [Louisiana Public Health Institute](#), which is administering the grant funds, says that the three-year grant is working with 25 different organizations — including universities like Tulane and LSU and grassroots groups like [Common Ground](#) — and the 60 outpatient sites the organizations operate. Williams says that so far LPHI has distributed \$20 million in funds and that the money will be used to increase access to care, improve the quality of that care, assist the clinics in becoming economically viable and not dependent wholly on grant funding, and to create a network of care for individual patients.

According to Williams, the problem with primary care isn't limited to a shortage of buildings, but doctors as well.

“After the storm, all of the Orleans area was designated as a health professional shortage area,” William reports.

With doctors returning to the region, Williams says the situation has gotten better, but adds there is still “a gap in the safety net” (medical services available to those without any other access to health care). Grant funds can be used for doctors' and other workers' salaries.

In case people think that the grant addresses only the needs of the poor and uninsured, Williams is quick to point out that the money “isn't specifically for the uninsured; it's targeted for providers,” and these clinics “provide services to everyone, regardless of their ability to pay.”

“We'd like (these clinics) to be places you'd want to send your grandmother to,” says Williams.

Let's see if \$80 million more can make even grandma happy.

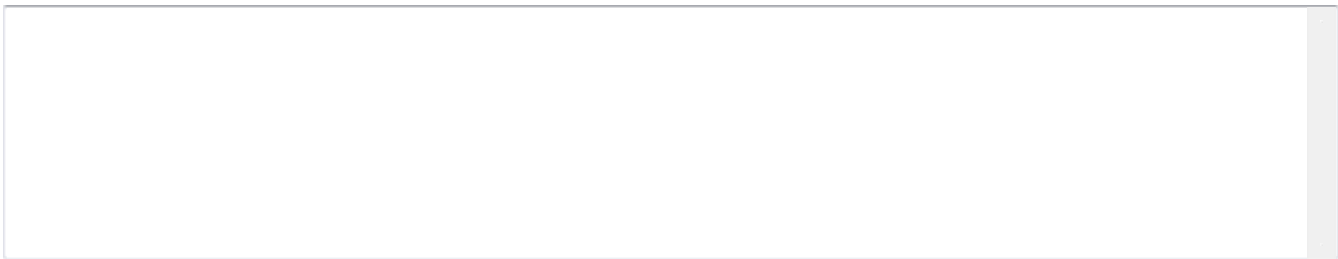
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