



1020 Washington St. N, Twin Falls, Idaho
(208) 737-5900 phd5.idaho.gov

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PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

Contact: Rene LeBlanc, SCPHD District Health Director, 737-5902

SCPHD Works With Community Partners to Find a Family Planning Provider For Blaine County Residents

TWIN FALLS-South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) will meet with community partners and medical service providers this week to help coordinate an interim solution for residents of Blaine County seeking family planning contraceptive services. These services were previously provided by SCPHD through a Federal Title X grant managed by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW).

Blaine County Commissioner Angenie McCleary is organizing the meeting this week between SCPHD, community partners, and potential service providers. Following that meeting, SCPHD expects to lease clinical space to a service provider who will provide low or no cost services to residents of Blaine and surrounding counties.

According to Rene LeBlanc, SCPHD District Health Director, "Title X is a federal grant program dedicated to providing individuals with comprehensive family planning and related preventative health services." The Title X program is managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Population Affairs (OPA).

In previous years, IDHW has been the sole grantee of the Title X contract. IDHW subsequently contracted with the seven local health districts in the State of Idaho to provide family planning and preventive health services. In fiscal year 2014, SCPHD received \$99,000 from Title X, to provide services to the 8 counties of Region 5.

This year, OPA awarded two Idaho organizations Title X grants. Planned Parenthood of the Greater Northwest (PPGNW) was awarded \$188,000 to provide services to Twin Falls County and IDHW was awarded \$1.5 million dollars to provide services to the other 43 counties. IDHW offered SCPHD \$68,000 to provide Title X services to 7 of 8 counties in our region, but SCPHD was excluded from providing services to Twin Falls County.

With the resignation of the SCPHD clinical specialist, and the inability to offer competitive compensation for a new clinical specialist within the south central Idaho market, the district was not able to continue to provide any family planning services.

This was a long, difficult and emotional decision by the Board of Health because of the valuable service this program provided to residents of the eight counties SCPHD serves.

The role of public health is changing nationally and SCPHD is changing as well. "The role of public health is moving towards 'assurance' or the process of assuring services to the residents of south central Idaho. Our job is to do the best we can within fiscal and legal limitations in order to assure that services are available from a provider," said LeBlanc.

According to LeBlanc, "There is access to affordable family planning providers in the Twin Falls area." LeBlanc stated that, "Many former family planning clients are seeking those services through patient medical homes such as Family Health Services and St. Luke's." He also notes that access to contraceptive coverage must be included in all health insurance plans.

Title X remains an important program as many individuals still cannot afford insurance and do not qualify for Medicaid. Currently, the Department of Health and Welfare is preparing to seek competitive bids from medical providers to provide Title X services in south central Idaho that are not covered by PPGNW, specifically in Minidoka, Lincoln, Jerome, Gooding, Cassia, Camas, and Blaine counties. That process may take several months; meanwhile clients must seek Title X service through PPGNW or use other providers.

Blaine County, however, has a shortage of affordable family planning services. Blaine County Commissioner Angenie McCleary intends to fix that, at least temporarily. Commissioner McCleary is spearheading an effort to provide low or no cost services until IDHW has a new Title X provider for Blaine County. Once a temporary arrangement is announced, SCPHD will notify former clients through its website.

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