

Queens Gets Slice Of City Health Care Initiative

By CRAIG McGUIRE

Thousands of Queens residents, some long deprived of primary medical care because of the high cost, will have access to basic health care services, under a plan unveiled last week by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

Giuliani announced the selection of the first group of new primary health care centers to be developed in all five boroughs, including two Queens locations. Two of the new facilities will be located in Arverne and South Jamaica.

The Primary Care Development Corporation (PCDC), formed in 1993 by the city as an independent non-profit

care, the new center, to be located at 114-39 Sutphin Blvd., will offer dental services, nutritional counseling and patient education.

The Rockaway Primary Care Center in Arverne, sponsored in a joint effort between the St. John's Episcopal Hospital/South Shore and the Peninsula Hospital Center, will cost \$2.3 million and have an annual capacity of approximately 20,000 visits annually.

Over one-half of the residents in public housing in Queens rely upon the services of these two hospitals.

"This center will be of great economic advantage by relieving the strain put on the emergency room services," said Peninsula Hospital Center spokesperson Karen Perlman. "There are a lot of people in this area who are not receiving fundamental routine primary health care."

"Many New York City neighborhoods have been identified as sorely lacking critical primary health care services," said Giuliani. "As a result, residents of these neighborhoods suffer unnecessary disease and disability, and are forced to rely heavily on hospital emergency rooms to receive most, if not all, of their non-emergency medical care.

"They also tend to wait far longer than is prudent to seek care, causing them to be sicker, and more costly to treat,

when they finally go to a doctor," he said.

City Council Speaker Peter Vallone of Astoria, was represented by Councilman Enoch Williams at the news conference announcing the selections. "This is an inspirational and affirmative undertaking for the city at this time," he said in a prepared statement. "Such an enterprise makes it far more feasible for New York to implement Medicaid managed care and ready our city's health care infrastructure for national health care reform."

Financing for the program will be provided through a \$17 million revolving loan fund established by the city to cover planning and development expenses; \$250 million in Medical Care Facilities Financing Agency bond funds for the capital financing; and a New York State Department of Health Primary Care Initiative grant. PCDC raised \$2.25 million from the business and philanthropic sectors to finance its day-to-day operations.

Once operational, the 16 primary care centers citywide will offer as many as 485,000 new visits per year, creating the capacity to care for over 162,000 new patients.

"This is the first round of designations," noted Geto. "And it is highly likely that additional locations in Queens will be added."



Mayor Rudolph Giuliani announces a health care initiative that will provide Queens with two centers out of a citywide total of 16.

organization, will arrange the financing for project. The five-year plan will establish dozens of primary health care centers citywide.

"As a result of this PCDC initiative, we will greatly increase access to family doctors for citizens of our city who live in low-income areas," said Giuliani, "where physicians and other health care personnel are severely lacking."

With five first-round site approvals, the Bronx topped the list, followed by Manhattan and Brooklyn with four

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