

Another article about Sylvia Acevedo.

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## Rep. Munson urges uninsured to use clinics

By Tom Polansek  
STAFF WRITER

Elgin – Prodded by pleas from local hospitals, state Rep. Ruth Munson announced a plan Tuesday to get more people without health insurance to use area clinics, instead of emergency rooms, for basic medical needs.

Specifics of the proposal are still undetermined, but Munson, R-Elgin, said the general idea was to mass produce some sort of education tool, such as a laminated information card, that tells people all the places they can go for health care. She said the tool would encourage uninsured patients with minor ailments to visit local clinics for better, faster care than they would receive at emergency rooms.

If that happens, Munson said it would reduce costs for hospital patients who have insurance and often end up shouldering the burden of unpaid bills.

“We can, and must, improve access to quality health care while at the same time reduce the stress on hospital emergency rooms,” Munson said.

The tool would likely be printed in English and Spanish and distributed locally in grocery stores, beauty and barber shops and taxi cabs. Sylvia Acevedo, an entrepreneur from Austin, Texas, has been hired to spearhead the project and said uninsured people often use taxis as ambulances.

In the past, Acevedo has created durable information cards to help Spanish-speaking domestic workers communicate with their

English-speaking employers. She said she has interviewed people in local emergency rooms and clinic waiting rooms for Munson’s project and that many did not know about all the services offered at free clinics.

For example, Acevedo said some patients had gone to the emergency room for colds or because their baby wouldn’t stop crying.

“They didn’t maybe understand the full range of services that were available” at clinics, Acevedo said.

Bob Tanner, executive director of the federally-funded Greater Elgin Family Care Center, said the facility provides treatment to anyone who walks through the door, regardless of their ability to pay.

National statistics show that the number of uninsured patients using the emergency room as a doctor’s office.

“They see it as a high need and they communicated it to me often,” she said about the hospitals.

Working with Munson and the hospitals is a host of local health-related groups, including the Kane County Health Access Integrated Network. Known as KCHAIN, the group works to link the uninsured with health care providers.

KCHAIN Director Deb McElroy said Sherman and Provena lost more than \$40 million last year treating uninsured patients.



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