

County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

POST OFFICE BOX 962, 1080 EMELINE AVE., SANTA CRUZ, CA 95061-0962
TELEPHONE: (831) 454-4000 FAX: (831) 454-4770 TDD: (831) 454-4123

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY ADMINISTRATION

January 29, 2010

David Blumenthal, MD
National Coordinator for Health Information Technology
Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC)
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Washington, DC

Dear Dr. Blumenthal:

On behalf of Santa Cruz County's Health Services Agency (HSA) and the Santa Cruz BeACON consortium, I am delighted to submit our application to become one of the Beacon communities under the Beacon Community Cooperative Agreement Program.

HSA's mission is simple: to protect and improve the health of the people of Santa Cruz County. While threats to the health and well-being of Santa Cruz County residents continue on many fronts, we have many assets to deploy in our efforts to improve health. Chief among these is the **collaborative partnership among the County's major health care organizations** — public, private, and non-profit — that have come together once again to support this proposal in a substantive way. Our proposal details the results of this partnership in providing coverage for the uninsured, coordinating care, and seeking efficiencies in the delivery of care across health care entities.

Another major asset is our **extraordinarily high rate of Electronic Health Record (EHR) adoption** (68% of providers overall, and 77% among primary care providers) and a 15-year history of establishing and expanding a **Health Information Exchange (HIE)**.

We believe this combination of a meaningful partnership and strong base for HIE expansion makes us an ideal **incubator** for testing exactly how HIE and health information technology can contribute to higher levels of quality, cost efficiency, and patient satisfaction. Our County is small enough to test ideas, yet representative enough to make them applicable to other communities.

Our proposal focuses intently on a particular aspect of care coordination: the missed opportunities to improve quality and reduce costs that are unacceptably common as patients experience **transitions of care**. Within the 3-year cooperative agreement period, we expect to document progress toward the goals we share with ONC: higher and more consistent quality of care for all patients as they move through transitions of care, more efficient use of limited health resources, better patient experiences, and the data to spur insurance and payer reform options that align incentives with these goals.

Thank you for this incredible opportunity to demonstrate how a local consortium can change its County health system for the better, using HIT/HIE as the driver.

Sincerely,



Rama Khalsa, PhD
Director