

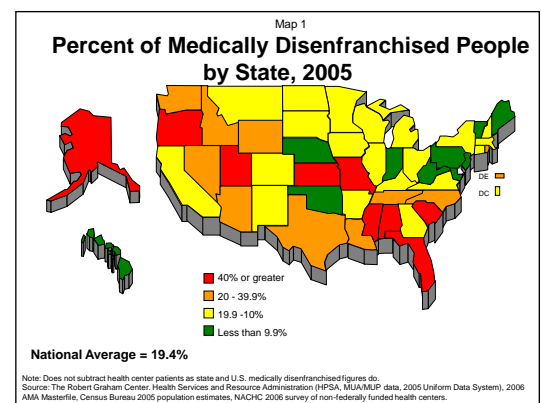
America's Health Centers: Serving as Health Care Homes

IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A MEDICAL OR HEALTH CARE HOME

A health care home – a regular, continuous, and patient-centered source of primary care – prevents sickness, manages chronic illness, and reduces the need for avoidable, costlier care such as emergency room visits and hospitalizations. Today, **56 million** Americans – most of whom actually *have* health insurance coverage – lack access to a health care home because they live in communities where there is an acute shortage of primary care providers. The lack of such physicians is associated with higher mortality rates and health care disparities. **Having both health insurance and a health care home improves access to care and health outcomes, while also saving precious health care dollars.**

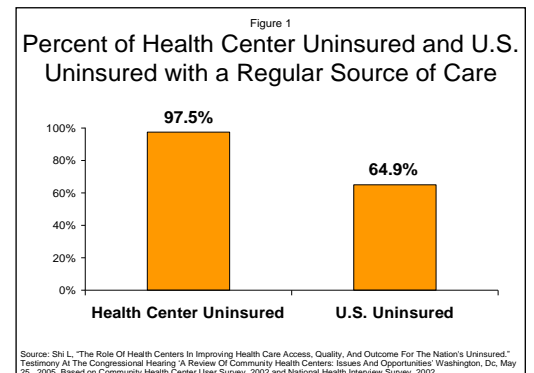
THE MEDICALLY DISENFRANCHISED POPULATION

These 56 million Americans are considered “medically disenfranchised” because they lack adequate access to primary care due to local physician shortages. They live in every state and nearly every county. As Map 1 displays, the medically disenfranchised account for two of every five residents in nine states (**Alabama, Alaska, Florida, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Oregon, South Carolina, and Utah**). The medically disenfranchised are a subset of the medically underserved – those who face multiple barriers to primary care – they often go without needed primary and preventive care unless they are able to negotiate barriers of distance, time and cost to find physician services outside of their communities.



HEALTH CENTERS AS HEALTH CARE HOMES

Health centers deliver primary care to vulnerable communities who often rely on health centers as their only source of care. They provide accessible, affordable, high quality health care to **18 million* patients nationally** – including 1 in 7 uninsured persons, 1 in 8 Medicaid beneficiaries, and 1 in 4 low income individuals. Health centers provide continuous primary and preventive care that **reduces the risk of new health care problems and lowers the overall potential cost of care.** Uninsured health center patients are much more likely to have a health care home than the uninsured nationally, as displayed in Figure 1.



CONTINUED IMPROVEMENTS

Without health centers, the number of medically disenfranchised would be 21% higher. Without the addition of new providers, and with the continuing decline in private physicians treating uninsured and Medicaid patients, the number will only grow. Distinct from the number of available physicians, other barriers to care exist, especially for those needing transportation, translation, and other specialized services to facilitate health care use. President Bush and a broad bipartisan coalition in Congress have recognized the need for health center expansion and have directed historic funding increases to the program since 2001. Even with the recent expansion of health centers, however, a high level of need remains in America's underserved communities. **Increased federal funding is the first step in assuring that health centers have the resources, staffing, and facilities necessary to serve as a true health care home to all in need.**

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*Includes patients of federally-funded health centers, non-federally funded health centers, and expected patient growth for 20087.

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