

La Clinica de la Raza offers expanded hours

By Shauntel Lowe/Times-Herald staff writer

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Medical assistant Angela Robledo, right, gets some vital signs from a sick Emma Quinn, 4, of Benicia, who visited La Clinica de la Raza Tuesday night with her mother, Sarah. The clinic has just received full licensing from the state.

Starting today, the community health clinic will be open from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays.

"We're really trying to give the community the best presentation, the best service as possible," site manager Monique Sims said.

To receive full licensing, the clinic had to undergo a series of inspections and reviews to ensure compliance with state and federal health care facility regulations. Without the licensing, the clinic was limited to 20 hours of service each week, open from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. weekdays and 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday,

Sims said. "We were kind of busting at the seams trying to squeeze our clients into those shortened hours," Sims said.

Sims said the clinic was "strategically" placed on Hospital Drive between Sutter Solano Medical Center and Kaiser Permanente to provide access to uninsured and underinsured patients who would -- at a high cost -- visit the nearby hospitals' emergency rooms for non-urgent concerns. The emergency room visits were expensive for the patients and the hospitals which may have only received a portion of, if any, payment from under- and uninsured patients, Sims said.

By law, the hospital must see any patient who comes to the emergency room, even if it's unlikely the person can pay the bill, Kim Trumbull, chief nurse executive for Sutter Solano said.

La Clinica is better able to connect low-income patients with government health insurance programs, like Medi-Cal, which will save the patients money in the future, Trumbull said.

After seeing the patients, the hospitals, which both provided grants to the clinic, refer or give patients information about La Clinica for future non-urgent care.

"We're really excited and very proud of the partnership we have with them," Trumbull said.

The county provided \$250,000 to start the clinic. Sutter Solano gave \$100,000 and will offer continued funding for a few years. Kaiser Permanente will issue \$100,000 grants for three years, totaling \$300,000.