

Care Harbor offering guaranteed spots for annual free health clinic

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FILE PHOTO: The L.A. Sports Arena hosts the Care Harbor L.A. medical clinic, which provides free dental, vision and preventative care to patients without health insurance.

[BENJAMIN BRAYFIELD/KPCC](#)



Care Harbor is offering wristbands to LA County's uninsured at a pair of giveaway events this weekend that secure a place for them at the charity's seventh annual free health care clinic later this month.

"We do it this way so they don't have to spend a day waiting in line at the clinic and then find out we're full," said Care Harbor president Donald Manelli.

Wristbands will be first given away Saturday at Ted Watkins Park, started at 10 a.m. On Sunday, wristbands will be available at LA Trade Technical College, also starting at 10 a.m.

The free, three-day clinic itself takes place from Jan. 20-22 at The Reef in Downtown Los Angeles. It's a new home for the clinic, as the previous ones took place in the now-shuttered L.A. Sports Arena.

According to Manelli, Care Harbor has about 3,000 wristbands to give out.

Those who have a chance to make it into the clinic will be exposed to an expansive array of health services ranging from dentistry to cardiology. Manelli told KPCC that Care Harbor has grown its clinical capabilities over the years, adding a women's health section and more specialties.

"As more people came into ACA and had access to primary care, they still needed specialty care, so we have cardiology, dermatology, urology and a lot of specialists there that can do diagnoses and evaluations on site," he said.

Preventative medicine is also a major point of emphasis at the clinic, Manelli added, so things like immunizations and shingles shots will be available as well.

Dental help remains the top need for most of the people who come into the clinic. Manelli said about 60 to 62 percent of the clinic's attendees need to see a dentist.

“Part of that is because if you have a toothache, you know it. You may not know you have high blood pressure, and you may not know you really should be evaluated for pre-diabetes,” he said.

You also might not know you actually qualify for insurance. Manelli said many people at the clinic arrive uninsured but don’t actually realize they qualify for assistance programs. So, insurance navigators will be on-site at the clinic to help enroll people.

“The whole idea of the clinic is sustainable care. It’s not just doing what we can do on site, but we want to get them into follow-up care and any kind of coverage programs that are available for them,” he said.

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