

## **CenCal Health Launches Multiple Campaigns to Help Increase Vaccination Rates in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties**

### **Unique Concepts Employed to Deliver Facts on Disease Prevention to the Public**

**Santa Barbara, CA – Sept 9, 2019** - Vaccination is a hot topic in the national news, on social media platforms and at dinner tables across America. More recently it has become a divisive political issue. A vocal movement of “anti-vaxxers” continues to influence some individuals and groups resistant to evidence-based facts on public health.

[CenCal Health](#) is committed to increasing vaccine-awareness and improving vaccination rates on the Central Coast by offering educational tools and resources for physicians, their patients and the general public.

A new education tool stressing the importance of all vaccines makes use of the concept of the *fotonovela* (a story told through a series of captioned photographs). This bilingual story-telling method is attention-grabbing and uses a non-traditional communications medium – a printed booklet version of a TV soap opera (a *telenovela*) – to deliver facts about the safety and efficacy of vaccines. The entertaining fotonovela, named *Infectious Rumors!*, includes recommended vaccine schedules for both children and adults, as well as information on how to apply for **Medi-Cal**.

CenCal Health is making the fotonovelas available to physicians and health care providers in its health network, as well as distributing through local Hispanic print media during the back-to-school season. There is also a digital version of the fotonovela in both English and Spanish on the [CenCal Health website](#).

CenCal Health partnered with [USC School of Pharmacy](#), a recognized pioneer in the development of these health-focused fotonovelas. USC’s fotonovelas are evidence-based, have shown to improve consumer knowledge, and have been recognized and awarded by organizations including the [American Pharmacists Association](#).

“Measles was declared eliminated from the United States in 2000, but there has been a resurgence of measles and other infectious diseases that can be prevented by vaccines,” said **Dr. Karen Hord**, CenCal Health Interim Chief Medical Officer. “We want to help reverse this disturbing trend.”

Another CenCal Health vaccine education initiative was implemented this year through a grant awarded by the [American Cancer Society](#) (ACS) to address a disparity in Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination rates in south Santa Barbara County. Launched in January with [Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics](#) (SBNC), parents with children in a targeted age range and without full HPV vaccination are handed a computer tablet. Health information is presented on the tablet, promoting the importance of HPV vaccination. Available in both English and Spanish, the digital lesson includes a short video designed to persuade parents to choose to vaccinate against HPV.

The goal of the project is to increase the rate of HPV vaccination of all children by age 13, as recommended by the [Center for Disease Control](#) (CDC). Data collected from the visit includes immediate vaccination and scheduled vaccination. Data collection will continue through December of this year. If successful, CenCal Health plans to make the program available throughout its network.

“We have previously partnered with the American Cancer Society on HPV vaccination rate improvement,” said **Bob Freeman**, CenCal Health CEO. “Their funding of our program in cooperation with the Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics will undoubtedly increase the vaccination numbers in south Santa Barbara County, preventing HPV infection and related cancer, and improving lives.”

Another immunization education resource that CenCal Health continues to promote is the annual [Preventive Health Guidelines](#). These publications summarize the CDC recommended immunization schedules for all adults and children. Each year they are updated and are made available on the [CenCal Health website](#), mailed to all member households, distributed at health fairs, and offered to providers for use as patient education materials.

For more information on CenCal Health’s vaccination tools and resources, visit [cencalhealth.org](#)

### **About CenCal Health**

CenCal Health’s mission is to improve the health and well-being of the communities we serve by providing access to high quality health services, along with education and outreach, for our membership. As a public entity, CenCal Health is a community-accountable health plan partnering with over 1,500 local physicians, hospitals and other providers in delivering exceptional patient care to more than 175,000 members – about one in four residents of Santa Barbara County and one in five residents of San Luis Obispo County. Established in 1983, it is the oldest managed Medicaid plan of its kind in the nation. CenCal Health employs close to 250 people at offices in both Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo, and contributes approximately \$50 million a month into the local economy, primarily through payments to healthcare providers who serve our membership. [cencalhealth.org](#)

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