

Central California Alliance for Health earns gold for third straight year

SCOTTS VALLEY -- The Central California Alliance for Health has earned gold for the third straight year.

The nonprofit health plan ranked first in the state for providing preventive services such as child immunization and prenatal care. All 38 Medi-Cal health plans compete for these honors.

The Scotts Valley-based Alliance, which serves 96,000 Medi-Cal members in Santa Cruz and Monterey counties, earned the top award in preventive services for the third year in a row.

"This is a great achievement," said Alan McKay, executive director of the Alliance, crediting the "dedicated and caring" physicians and staff who are "committed to customer service."

The award is based on measures developed by the National Committee for Quality Assurance.

"Our physicians and the Alliance are truly making a difference in health outcomes for members of our community," said Dr. Richard Helmer, medical director for the alliance.

The nonprofit health plan was developed in 1996 to improve access to health care for lower-income people who lacked a primary care doctor and often relied on the emergency room for all care.

Today, more than 1,195 local health care providers participate in the Alliance network, which plans to expand to Merced County Oct. 1, serving 66,000 Medi-Cal recipients there.

The Alliance also operates Healthy Kids of Santa Cruz County and Alliance Care In Home Support Services and participates in the state's Healthy Families program.