

MPH Special Project  
Public Health Internship  
**The Economic Impact of the Alachua County Low Income Pool Program**  
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Abstract

**Background:** The United States is among the top countries for health care spending, making it imperative to understand the distribution of these expenditures. Over one-half (52.5%) of US expenditures are spent in hospital, physician, or clinical services settings. The leading expenditure in the hospital setting is “unnecessary health care spending”, which is attributed to 31.1% of overall health care spending. Several ways in which health care costs can be reduced include unnecessary emergency room visit aversions, providing third party and primary care coverage to uninsured individuals, timely hospital inpatient discharges, and proper diabetes management.

**Results:** The Alachua County Low Income Pool program provided services to 16,340 walk in visits over the past year. Of these walk in visits, self report data shows that 25.35% of patients would have utilized the emergency room if the walk in services were not available at the Alachua County Health Department, resulting in 4,142 averted emergency room visits. These averted emergency room visits reduced expenditures by \$2,437,856.94. Additionally, the Alachua County Health Department assists patients to fill out/submit applications for Medicaid and enroll with a primary care provider. Over the past year, 25 individuals have been granted Medicaid coverage and 85 uninsured individuals have been enrolled in primary care coverage resulting in \$233,310 in annual direct and indirect cost savings.

Shands Teaching Hospital refers patients in need of additional medical services to the Alachua County Medical Home program. 39 patients over the last year have had reduced inpatient stays due to the Medical Home program, with an economic impact range of \$28,665 to \$57,330. The Low Income Pool program has also been able to obtain retroactive Medicaid reimbursement for Shands Teaching Hospital in the amount of \$592,158.68. Lastly, the Low Income Pool program enrolls clients who have Diabetes into a disease management program. Cost savings from direct and indirect annual expenditures were \$11,431.

The total economic impact range of the Alachua County Low Income Pool program was \$3,339,730.62 to \$3,404,704.62.

**Conclusion:** The findings of this program evaluation run parallel with the belief that improved utilization of health care resources could positively affect health care expenditures. In an era where accountability is paramount, findings such as these show that a group effort is necessary to ensure that precious resources are not wasted, unnecessary spending is not allowed, and quality patient centered care is still provided.