

Thousands of volunteers needed for essential annual health clinic

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Dental hygienist Kathryn Anderson cleans a patient's teeth during the... (Karen Ducey / The Seattle Times) [More](#) ▾

By [The Seattle Times editorial board](#)

Every year for the past decade, the Seattle/King County Clinic has provided medical and dental care to uninsured or underinsured individuals during a multiday residency at Seattle Center. The total treated so far? More than 33,000 patients — each at no cost. The

services saved nearly \$30 million in out-of-pocket charges for all those folks. Treatment also saved people untold numbers of sick days and time trying to find providers.

The SKCC returns for its 11th year April 23-26 at Seattle Center. The call is out for medical, dental, vision and social work professionals, along with interpreters and general support volunteers. All told, thousands of people will be needed. Health care organizations, civic agencies, nonprofits and businesses also play a part. It's probably safe to say that few opportunities arise to make such a massive difference in our community.

Volunteer health care providers at the clinic offer diagnostic medical services, [dental care](#) — which can be hard to access even with insurance — and eye exams. Others connect people with social services, while general volunteers assist with everything from stocking and restocking instruments to making sure foot traffic moves smoothly between treatment areas.

“In the early days of the clinic, it was widely assumed that the demand for this event would be temporary. ... Today, deep cuts to the health care safety net threaten even those who are stably housed and employed,” said Christine Lindquist, executive director of the Washington Healthcare Access Alliance, in a volunteer callout.

Many of the people who line up for treatment at the clinic are part of the “missing middle”; those who make too much to qualify for subsidized care, but not enough to afford the services they need, Lindquist wrote in an op-ed

last year with Francisca Schwarz, project director of Seattle/King County Clinic.

Passage of the 2025 Federal Budget Reconciliation Bill, along with other policy changes, is expected to significantly increase the number of uninsured people nationwide over the next 10 years. Others might see coverage cuts. All of this will affect the supply of doctors willing to treat patients and could lead to even more doctors closing up shop. The national patchwork of health coverage is likely to continue to fray, making services like those provided at the Seattle/King County Clinic more essential.

So many times, even those with jobs and insurance can't get basic preventive services, such as dental cleanings, eye tests or foot care. Keeping people healthy is vital to the well-being of all of us in Washington and beyond. At the clinic, volunteers will be compensated with the knowledge they truly made a difference for our neighbors.

For more information about volunteering, visit seattlecenter.org/skcclinic or call [206-684-7200](tel:206-684-7200).

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