

# Stanford, Valley Children's Hospital creating doctor residency

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Valley Children's Hospital announced Wednesday morning it is joining with [Stanford University School of Medicine](#) to create a residency program for the Madera County hospital.

The graduate education program at [Valley Children's](#) will train doctors to be pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists officials from the hospital said.

The new program raises questions about any ongoing relationship between Valley Children's and the University of California at San Francisco, which has had a 40-year partnership with the hospital. [UCSF-Fresno](#) pediatric residents currently split their training time between Valley Children's and Community Regional Medical Center in downtown Fresno, operated by [Community Medical Centers](#).

Dr. David Christensen, chief medical officer at Valley Children's, said that for now UCSF-Fresno current residents will continue to have a place to train at Valley Children's and so would interns coming into the program.

But Community Medical Centers and Valley Children's have been at loggerheads over control of pediatric patients in the central San Joaquin Valley and now the two will be competing to train doctors.

Valley Children's revealed in January that it had plans to create its own graduate education program, and later that month Community Medical Centers and UCSF-Fresno said they were joining forces to expand pediatric specialty services and pediatric medical education.

On Wednesday, Dr. Michael Peterson, interim associate dean at UCSF-Fresno, said Wednesday's announcement of a partnership between Valley Children's and Stanford came as no surprise. "But it's still profoundly disappointing," he said. "We haven't changed our opinion that having two competing training programs — competing for quality faculty, patients and clinical training sites — is not going to be good for this community."

There's an absolute commitment by UCSF to maintain pediatric training in this community.

Dr. Michael Peterson, UCSF-Fresno interim associate dean

Dr. Becky Blankenburg, pediatric residency program director at Stanford, said the Valley has room for two doctor training programs. "There is certainly enough patients for two, and there are certainly enough faculty in the Valley for two programs."

We want to collaborate as much as possible with UCSF and UCSF-Fresno.

Dr. Becky Blankenburg, Stanford pediatric residency program director

Peterson said UCSF continues to have discussions with Community Medical Centers about expanding pediatric services. Fresno is a very important pediatric training site for UCSF, he said.

Valley Children's officials said Wednesday the new training program would increase patients' access to doctors in the Valley, which is a medically underserved area. "Our aim is to train the next generation of pediatricians and pediatric specialists with the eye on more access," said CEO Todd Suntrapak. "That will be at the core of our new residency program."

The program at Valley Children's also will offer fellowships, which allow pediatricians to continue their education in a

subspecialty, Blankenburg said. Pediatricians now must leave the Valley after residency for fellowship training.

She supports Valley Children's mission, Blankenburg said. "They want to create outstanding clinicians who are leaders in the field and who are dedicated to the Central Valley."

Doctors in the Valley who teach in the residency program will be full-time Stanford faculty, Blankenburg said. Their salaries will be paid by Valley Children's Hospital, she said.

The first Valley Children's Pediatric Residency Program class should start in July 2017, said Dr. Jolie Limon, introduced Wednesday as the hospital's chief of pediatrics who will lead the new program. Limon joined Valley Children's as a hospitalist in 2000. Each residency class will have 13 residents when fully implemented, she said.

The three-year residency program at Valley Children's will include rotations at Saint Agnes Medical Center, Kaiser Permanente Medical Center-Fresno, Dignity Health and local pediatrician offices.

Residents also will go to Stanford in Palo Alto for rotations in adolescent medicine, developmental pediatrics and other electives, Limon said. Stanford will send residents to Valley Children's for a required one-month rotation in emergency medicine, she said.

In the future, residents may have rotations in Bakersfield, possibly Visalia and Porterville, Suntrapak said. Valley Children's Hospital will continue to serve as a teaching site for more than 190 residents and medical students in a dozen other programs, including those based at Kaweah Delta Health Care District in Visalia, Mercy Medical Center in Merced and Clinica Sierra Vista in Fresno.

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Timeline of events

**October 2014:** Valley Children's Hospital severs ties with Santé Community Physicians, the largest doctors' group in Fresno and a partner with Community Medical Centers.

**October 2014:** Specialty Medical Group Central California Inc., affiliated with Valley Children's, severs ties with Santé.

**Jan. 8, 2015:** Valley Children's announces plans to create its own pediatric residency program and fellowship training for pediatric subspecialists.

**Jan. 26, 2015:** Community Medical Centers announces an intent to expand pediatric specialty care and pediatric medical education with UCSF-Fresno.

**June 3, 2015:** Valley Children's announces partnership with Stanford University School of Medicine to create a graduate medical education program based at the Madera County hospital.