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New CEO appointed at North County Health Services



Barbara Kennedy is slated to take the helm as North County Health Services' new president and CEO. (Courtesy NCHS)



By **Linda McIntosh**

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A new CEO is taking the helm at North County Health Services, a nonprofit community health care provider headquartered in San Marcos with more than a dozen clinics from Ramona to Encinitas to Perris.

The nonprofit's current president and CEO, Irma Cota, is retiring and handing over the reigns to Barbara (Dember) Kennedy, who starts Feb. 26.

Kennedy served as president and CEO of Northern Arizona Healthcare Verde Valley Medical Center in Arizona for nearly three years until 2015. The nonprofit Northern Arizona Healthcare system serves 700,000 patients

across the northern area of Arizona and has a staff of 3,000 doctors, nurses and healthcare experts.

Kennedy has more than 20 years experience in leadership roles in the health care industry, including most recently as president and CEO of Dember Health Strategies and Consulting, where she did strategic and operational planning for hospital and health system clients.

Kennedy is known for her commitment to improving the health of diverse communities with an emphasis on providing an outstanding patient care experience.

“She prides herself on taking an innovative approach to clinical care, patient services and business operations,” according to a statement from North County Health Services.

“I am truly honored to be leading such an amazing organization which provides high-quality and much-needed health care services to the communities we serve,” Kennedy said in a statement. “I am excited to join the NCHS family and to continue to support the existing and important mission and vision of the organization while embarking upon and pursuing new and innovative ways to enhance and increase our presence in North County and the Riverside area as its premier health care provider.”

Cota led the nonprofit for more than two decades and spearheaded growth to 13 clinics and a workforce of more than 700 staff. The projected annual budget for 2018 is nearly \$80 million, compared to \$12 million when Cota started.

The nonprofit serves over 65,000 patients annually at community health centers from Carlsbad, Oceanside and Vista to Escondido, Valley Center and Borrego Springs along with two mobile clinics. The 47-year-old nonprofit provides affordable health care for uninsured and underinsured community members, including transportation to clinics.

“Barbara has the background and skills to ensure that NCHS remains a thriving organization,” Cota said.

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