

SignUpNow

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Important information
inside on Town Hall
Meetings for FAMIS!

Spring 2002



SignUpNow would like to thank the following Foundations and Organizations for their support.

The Annabella Jenkins Foundation
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The Portsmouth General Hospital Foundation
The Sentara Health Foundation
The Virginia Health Care Foundation
The Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association
The Virginia Poverty Law Center
The Virginia Primary Care Association
The Williamsburg Community Health Fund



Did you know?

Following are some new information and clarifications to the FAMIS program.

Premium Collection On Hold

Premium collection in FAMIS has been suspended until further notice. Letters will be going out around April 15th to notify families of this important change. Families will continue to pay copayments for services for their children, but for families currently paying monthly premiums, this payment is not required at this time.

The new administration and DMAS are analyzing cost to families in the FAMIS program and will make final decisions regarding premiums later this year.

Redetermination Enforcement

Because many families that transitioned to FAMIS from

CMSIP have been confused about the change in program and have not responded to notices regarding the need to redetermine their child's eligibility for FAMIS, DMAS has extended the period of time for annual redetermination an additional six months. Children who were due to lose their coverage in December because of noncompliance with redetermination are currently still receiving services and will continue to do so through June 30th. If by then, the family has not responded to the written or telephone communications from the FAMIS CPU regarding redetermination, the child(ren)'s coverage will be terminated.

If you work with clients who are currently in the FAMIS program, please remind them of the need to redetermine their child's eligibility after one year of coverage and to respond to the letters and/or phone calls from the FAMIS CPU concerning this.

What Happens If... [More Clarification on the 6-Month Waiting Period]

There is NO WAITING PERIOD for a family to apply for FAMIS under the following circumstances:

If the parents are separated or divorced and the parent or stepparent who provided the coverage through his/her work stopped the coverage and left the family.

If an absent parent under court order to supply medical support drops employer sponsored or privately purchased coverage for the child.

[In both of these examples the person who ceased the coverage is not considered a *family member* as defined by FAMIS — *the child's parent or stepparent who lives with the child.*]



Speak Up on FAMIS

By Linda Nablo,
SignUpNow

For more
information:
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or
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News...

Did you know?

Secretary of Health and Human Resources Jane Woods and the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) **want to hear from you regarding ways to improve Virginia's child health insurance program — FAMIS.**

During the coming months, DMAS will be working to finalize the official regulations for the FAMIS program as well as revising some current FAMIS policies and procedures — but first, they want to hear from families, medical providers and community workers and volunteers who have used or tried to use the program.

Five town hall meetings are scheduled around Virginia in late April. Legislators and members of the DMAS Board and staff will be there to hear from you. It is also expected that Secretary Woods and Governor Warner will attend some of the meetings to hear what the public has to say. It is very important that you and others from your organization attend and help inform policy makers. If you know of families that have had direct experience with FAMIS, please let them know about this opportunity as well and urge them to share their stories with those who can make the system better.

At the meetings, each person will have approximately five minutes to speak. With such limited time, it is usually best if your remarks address the two or three issues that you believe are most important; although you may want to include other points in your written comments. It is also very informative if

you have a "real-life" story to tell about a family that was successful or unsuccessful in enrolling in FAMIS.

If you wish to speak, you should arrive between 6–7PM to sign up and it would be helpful if you brought a written copy of your remarks or concerns as well. If you cannot attend in person but wish to offer **written testimony**, you may send your statement to:

Tom Edicola
VA Dept. of Medical Assistance Services
600 East Broad Street, Suite 1300
Richmond, VA 23219

Many of you have expressed concern with how the program currently operates. Don't miss this opportunity to tell the policy makers how FAMIS is working for Virginia's children. **STEP FORWARD - YOUR TESTIMONY IS IMPORTANT!**

5 Town Hall Meetings:

- **April 22nd** in **Abingdon** from 7-9PM at Virginia Highlands Community College, ISC Building, Room 220
- **April 24th** in **Newport News** from 7-9PM at Christopher Newport University, Student Center, Room 150
- **April 26th** in **Lynchburg** from 7-9PM at Central Virginia Community College, Amherst Room 2123
- **April 29th** in **Fairfax** from 7-9PM at George Mason University, Dewberry Hall
- **April 30th** in **Richmond** from 7-9PM at the General Assembly Building, Senate Room B



Results of the 2002 General Assembly Session

By Jill Hanken,
Virginia Poverty
Law Center

Quite a few changes are coming to FAMIS and Medicaid as a result of this year's General Assembly Session.

Two bills were adopted, HB1062 and HB790. The first bill directs the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) to create agreements with the Department of Education (administrator of the free and reduced-price lunch program) and the Department of Health (administrator of the WIC program) so that they may assist in identification and enrollment of children eligible for FAMIS. The second bill allows caretaker relatives to apply for FAMIS on behalf of children in their care without the necessity of the caretaker having written permission from the child's parent or official legal guardianship.

In addition, changes to the programs were made in the Budget Bill. First, the Governor restored \$2.2 million to the FAMIS program. Budget language also ensures that adequate funding will be available for enrollment of eligible children in FAMIS. This means there will not be a waiting list for the program should it run out of its currently allocated funds.

The approved budget also includes language that makes significant changes to the FAMIS and Medicaid programs. It provides for another "good cause" exception to the FAMIS six-month waiting period for previously insured children. If an otherwise-eligible family's health insurance premium cost is 10% or greater of the family's countable monthly income, the waiting period will not apply.

Perhaps the most significant and welcome change for families is the leveling of MI Medicaid income guidelines at 133% of the Federal Poverty Level regardless of the child's age. No longer will a child "age out" of Medicaid at his/her sixth birthday because of family income. This change will alleviate the complicated situation where families with children of different ages have to deal with both the Medicaid and FAMIS programs.

These changes should go into effect on July 1, 2002.

Several bills which were carried over until 2003 will be studied in the interim. Those bills address important issues such as premiums, mental health coverage, coordination between the Department of Social Services and FAMIS, 12-month coverage, and data collection. After review, the Administration and/or the Joint Commission on Health Care may support additional program changes.

By now, you should all be aware that the Federal Poverty Guidelines changed on February 14, 2002. These guidelines are the basis for the eligibility levels for FAMIS and Medicaid. For the 2002

Medicaid and FAMIS guidelines go to our website www.signupnowva.org/program.asp and select "eligibility income guidelines" or contact our office at 804-965-1352 or signupnow@vhha.com.

SignUpNow currently has four **FAMIS & Medicaid Workshops** planned around the Commonwealth. They are:

May 6th at Winchester Medical Center in **Winchester** from 9AM-12:30PM

May 16th at the Oxbow Center in **St. Paul** (Wise County) from 9AM-12:30PM

June 11th at Virginia Baptist Hospital in **Lynchburg** from 1PM-4:30PM

June 24th at Carilion Roanoke Community Hospital in **Roanoke** from 9AM-12:30PM.

SignUpNow Trainings

For more information, call 804-965-1352 or visit www.signupnowva.org/calendar.asp

Income Guidelines Change

Virginia's Total FAMIS Enrollment as of 3/29/02 is 41,013 or 51%*

Congratulations! Seven localities have reached over 100% enrollment in the FAMIS program — Fairfax City (228%), Falls Church (143%), Manassas (139%), Arlington (113%), Williamsburg (110%), Alexandria (105%) and Prince William (103%). Fairfax County is close behind at 95% enrollment.

An additional 14 localities have achieved higher than 70% FAMIS enrollment. 48 localities are between 50% and 70%!

To check your area's progress visit the SignUpNow web site: www.signupnowva.org/program.asp

**Note: These numbers are likely to change significantly in the coming months due to the availability of updated estimates of the target population, implementation of policy changes, and cancellation of some cases.*

News...

A New Team in Place

Governor Warner's commitment to improving Virginia's child health insurance programs is reflected in his recent appointments. Jane Woods, Secretary of Health and Human Resources, worked with advocacy groups and the previous administration to establish and monitor Virginia's first Title XXI Program as a Senator in the General Assembly where she served as Chairman of the Senate's Education and Health Committee and Vice Chairman of the Joint Commission on Health Care. She is known to many as a champion of children's health care and has clearly stated that this initiative will be one of her first priorities.

Next, the Governor appointed a new Director of the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS), the state agency responsible for administering both the Medicaid and FAMIS programs. Patrick Finnerty was formerly the Executive Director of the Joint Commission on Health Care, a legislative commission that studies, reports and makes recommendations on all areas of health care to the Virginia General Assembly. During his tenure with the Joint Commission, Mr. Finnerty became familiar with the challenges presented by Virginia's health insurance programs for children and he ensured regular review and analysis of the policies and operations of both FAMIS and

Medicaid by the Joint Commission. His appointment to lead Virginia's Medicaid agency signals the promise of significant systematic improvements.

One of the first actions taken by Director Finnerty was to begin to centralize child health functions into one unit within DMAS in order to improve coordination and accountability. This new unit will report to Cynthia B. Jones, the newly appointed Deputy Director. Ms. Jones brings a strong background to her new position. As a Project Team Leader with the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, she directed the recent review of Virginia's child health insurance program and the Commission's comprehensive report, which documented many administrative, operational and policy concerns with the program.

Reporting to Ms. Jones is the FAMIS Outreach Program Manager for DMAS, Tom Edicola. Mr. Edicola oversees a team of five Outreach Educators serving different regions of the Commonwealth. (As reported in the *SignUpNow Outreach* for Winter 2001.)

This new team appears to have both the experience and commitment necessary to make Virginia's health insurance programs for children a success.

