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Outreach

Communities Connecting Kids With Health Coverage

Update from the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services

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Services



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Federal Legislation Passed

Federal legislation was passed in February requiring that after July 1, 2006 all current Medicaid recipients and new applicants provide proof of US citizenship. The Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services are currently working on the guidelines for which documents will be deemed as "proof".

It should be noted, however, that additional legislation is working its way through Congress that might repeal this requirement.

As soon as information is available to DMAS, the agency will make the final decision and regulations known to the public.

Media Campaign

DMAS is conducting several media activities as part of this year's Cover the Uninsured Week (CTUW). FAMIS TV ads will be aired in Richmond and Norfolk. Radio Ads in Spanish will be broadcast in Richmond, Norfolk and Fredericksburg. Additionally, print ads in Spanish will appear in a Spanish newspaper and magazine.

A targeted postcard mailing was done in March to promote the FAMIS MOMS and FAMIS Select programs. An additional mailing is going out during CTUW.

FAMIS MOMS and FAMIS Select

The two newest additions to the FAMIS family are doing extraordinarily well. Enrollment in FAMIS MOMS has already exceeded the expectation for the end of

the fiscal year. Four hundred and fifteen women have been provided with coverage for prenatal care since August 1, 2006.

Participation in FAMIS Select has been steadily rising, though the number is still small. This program is a cost savings for the Commonwealth. For every 5 children enrolled in FAMIS Select, the state can afford to cover an additional child in regular FAMIS.



Children's Health Insurance Program Advisory Committee

The Children's Health Insurance Program Advisory Committee (CHIPAC) conducted its quarterly meeting in March. Dr. Mary Alice Lee, Senior Policy Fellow at Voices for Connecticut's Children addressed the group about some exciting work her group has done using data to improve child health services in her state. Children's Health Council (a group in Connecticut with a purpose and membership similar to CHIPAC) used performance monitoring, and linked Medicaid Managed Care data with public health data to inform policy decisions. Results included development of policy and practices to increase utilization of well-child care and dental care and improve the quality of asthma care. CHIPAC members agreed to consider a number of Dr. Lee's suggestions in future meetings.

The next meeting of CHIPAC will be Thursday, June 8th and is open to the public. For more information about CHIPAC contact Andy Feagans at andrew.feagans@dmass.virginia.gov.

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2006 General Assembly Session

By Jill Hanken,
Staff Attorney,
Virginia Poverty
Law Center
and
Chair,
Virginia Coalition for
Children's Health

As you probably know the 2006 General Assembly adjourned its regular session on March 11th without passing a state budget. Matters during the regular session were complicated by the fact that the House and Senate Budgets had extremely different transportation plans and this caused a deadlock in budget negotiations. Many of the items that were supported by the Virginia Coalition for Children's Health and other child health advocates were wrapped up in budget language that has yet to be passed. The General Assembly reconvened on April 19th to act on Governor Kaine's vetoes of and revisions to legislation and then tried again to reach terms on transportation issues and the budget.

Still Pending...

The following issues remain in "budget limbo" - increased reimbursement rates for pediatric services provided to children in FAMIS and FAMIS Plus, a study to determine the feasibility of allowing higher income families to purchase FAMIS insurance, and expanding eligibility of FAMIS MOMS to 175% of the Federal Poverty Level. If no budget is passed, all of these will fail.

At the end of the regular session, the House and Senate versions of the budget differed quite a bit on these issues. While both Budgets recognized the need to improve provider reimbursement for pediatric services, the Senate increase was delayed until July 2007, but it provided a much larger (15%) increase for pediatric services. On the other hand, the House increase for pediatric services was more modest (5% in '06 and 3% in '07), but it began a full year earlier. Passing a combination of the two - money in July '06 to quickly address the problem, and a larger increase in '07 - would be the best outcome. While the Senate budget included funding to increase FAMIS MOMS eligibility to 175% of poverty, the House's version did not. The House version adopted budget language directing DMAS to study a buy-in program for children in families with higher incomes, but this was not in the Senate version.

Passed Legislation

The General Assembly did pass legislation ordering a Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) study of the options for extending health insurance coverage to Virginians who are currently uninsured. According to HJ 158 (*Del. John M. O'Bannon, III, Patron*), JLARC will 1) analyze the number of uninsured Virginians, the reasons they do not have insurance, the duration of periods without coverage, and their eligibility for employer-based and private health insurance coverage or government health care plans; 2) assess the cost incurred by the Commonwealth, its insured citizens, and health care providers for the provision of emergency room or other health care to treat the uninsured population in Virginia; 3) evaluate programs or plans implemented in other states as well as proposals that have been made by national organizations to expand health insurance coverage to the uninsured; and 4) develop policy options to extend health insurance coverage to Virginia's uninsured that balance facilitating access to health insurance with requiring Virginians to assume greater personal responsibility for obtaining a minimum level of health insurance coverage. JLARC expects to give a preliminary report on the study prior to the General Assembly Session next year, with the final version due sometime in 2007.

Another bill that passed concerns Medicaid reform in Virginia. HB 758 (*Del. Phillip Hamilton, Patron*) requires that DMAS create an 8 to 15 member "Medicaid Revitalization Committee" by July 1, 2006 to consider and prepare recommendations to "reform and revitalize" the current Medicaid program; submit the recommendations from the committee to the House Committees on Appropriations and Health, Welfare and Institutions and the Senate Committees on Finance and Education and Health by December 1, 2006; and if a waiver from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is needed to implement any of the proposed reforms that such waiver be submitted by May 15, 2007. The committee members consist of

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representatives from affected state agencies, stakeholders, advocacy groups, and providers who serve Medicaid enrollees. Some potential reforms to be considered are: offering health savings accounts for those with chronic disease; implementing disease state management (DSM) programs with monetary incentives for individuals to make healthy decisions; transitioning all Medicaid recipients into either

managed care organizations, a DSM program, or care coordination program; the phased in implementation of electronic benefits cards for waiver enrollees to access voluntary enhanced benefits and services; and a provision for incentive funds that can be earned and awarded to enrollees.

It's not over yet, stay tuned...



Rhonda Seltz Named “2006 Child Health Champion”

“**Relentless**” is the only word to describe our 2006 Child Health Champion in her work as the Coordinator of the Radford University FAMIS Outreach program. From clinics to church revivals, and auto shops to grocery stores, Rhonda Seltz goes where the people are in order to help boost enrollment. Her hard work has paid off, earning her a **2006 Virginia Health Care Foundation Unsung Hero** award.

“Rhonda has a passion for this work. She will not quit until she makes sure these children have coverage,” states one of her coworkers. With a tireless enthusiasm for helping others, she has assisted with enrolling over 2,000 uninsured children in the New River Valley. An additional 800 children have been assisted with continuing their coverage at time of annual renewal.

Rhonda goes to great lengths to spread the word about FAMIS and get children enrolled in the program. She pushed to expand the reach of her project from five to nine counties and increased the percentage of eligible children enrolled in the region to over 99%. She set up outreach sites in hospitals, libraries, YMCA’s and other places where it’s convenient to sign up. She even formed alliances with the Virginia Employment Commission and local area employers to develop a system, to ensure that when there are layoffs within a company, the employees’ children have no lapses in coverage.



It is not enough for Rhonda to have children enrolled in the program, she wants them to actively use the services as well. Because of this, she has tackled issues related to access to care. Rhonda has visited every dentist in the New River Valley to encourage them to sign up for the Smiles For Children dental program. When she found a need to communicate with the growing Latino population in the area, she learned how to speak Spanish. She is truly an outspoken advocate for her families and for improvements to the state’s programs.

Rhonda Seltz has helped change the lives of many families. “If Rhonda had not been so motivated, my 3 month old baby would not have received the care she needed. My eight year old would not have been able to have her tonsils removed and she would be very sick right now with strep throat,” states one of Rhonda’s clients. A school nurse from Montgomery County Public School appreciates “Rhonda’s efforts to help our students enroll in FAMIS. Because of her, many of our less fortunate students now have access to medical care when they need it.”

In addition to the award and accolades, Rhonda, like all of the **2006 VHCF Unsung Heroes in Health Care**, was honored with a \$2,000 contribution to the Radford University FAMIS Outreach Program in her name by the Virginia Association of Health Plans (VAHP). This is the fourth consecutive year that VAHP has issued these checks, which serve both to honor the Unsung Hero and help improve efforts to increase access to primary care for uninsured Virginians facing barriers to care.



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Thanks...



To Our VA CKF Partners

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To SignUpNow's Partners

Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services and the Virginia Primary Care Association.

Cover The Uninsured Week

May 1 - May 7, 2006

As you may or may not know this week is Cover the Uninsured week! Interested in what is happening in your area? Go to www.covertheuninsuredweek.org for a listing of Virginia activities during this week and the rest of the month!

DMAS Update

Continued from front cover

Special Training Events

DMAS, in conjunction with the Department of Social Services and VISSTA/VCU and the Virginia Health Care Foundation, is conducting a series of training events around Virginia for Families and Children eligibility workers and supervisors. Covering policy and procedure regarding the FAMIS Programs and Medicaid for Pregnant Women, these trainings also present information about successful renewal practices.

Seven of the 9 trainings have already been held. It is expected that more than 1,000 eligibility workers and supervisors will have participated in the trainings. Feedback from attendees has been extremely positive. Answers to questions asked by workers during the sessions are being compiled into a document that will be posted on the FAMIS website (www.famis.org) as a reference that workers can access on an ongoing basis. As an additional resource for eligibility workers, a special e-mail account for questions has been created at DMAS.