

## VCCH's 2003 Platform

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



The VCCH has developed its 2003 Legislative Platform which will be promoted in the General Assembly. It is time for organizations to join/rejoin the Coalition for 2003. Please review the Platform and send in the authorizing statement below. The Coalition has had more than 100 member organizations since it started in 1998. We hope every organization will join again for what promises to be a very interesting and challenging session.

**The Overall Goals** of the VCCH are 1) to maintain and improve Virginia's health insurance programs for children and 2) to support the enrollment of eligible children into those programs.

The VCCH supports the following objectives (many of which were detailed in the article on the front page of this newsletter):

**1. Streamlined application procedures and the coordination of Medicaid and the Family Access to Medical Insurance Security Program (FAMIS)**

*While recent legislative and administrative changes have greatly improved application procedures and coordination, several additional improvements are needed. (See cover article.)*

**2. Improved Access to Health Insurance and Services**  
*(See cover article.)*

**3. Comprehensive Outreach Activities and Funding for those Activities**  
*DMAS must continue its statewide media campaign and its support of local outreach efforts to identify and enroll eligible children into Medicaid and FAMIS.*

**4. Better Data Collection and Evaluation**  
*DMAS should develop a longitudinal database that can accurately track applications, denials, redeterminations, and utilization of health services.*

**The Following Organization Supports the 2003 Platform of the Virginia Coalition for Children's Health and Authorizes Participation as a Member Organization.**

**Organization:**

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**Contact Person:**

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**Address:**

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**Phone:**

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**Fax:**

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**E-Mail:**

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**Authorizing Signature:**

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**Please remove this page, complete the needed information, and fax it to Kim Bemberis at SignUpNow (804) 828-4370 or e-mail [signupnow@vhcf.org](mailto:signupnow@vhcf.org) for a more detailed platform and sign-up sheet.**

## SignUpNow

c/o VHCF  
1001 E. Broad Street  
Suite 445  
Richmond, VA 23219  
[www.signupnowva.org](http://www.signupnowva.org)

### SignUpNow is Moving!

SignUpNow's staff and services will be moving to the **Virginia Health Care Foundation** on January 1. We look forward to working with the Foundation's Trustees and Staff. This partnership with VHCF's Child Health Insurance Initiatives will strengthen the effectiveness of two complimentary programs.

**After January 1**, SignUpNow may be reached by calling **(804) 828-6062** or e-mailing [signupnow@vhcf.org](mailto:signupnow@vhcf.org). The new mailing address will be: **1001 E. Broad Street, Suite 445, Richmond, VA 23219**.

### SignUpNow Tool Kit Updates

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition of the SignUpNow *Tool Kit*, published in August of 2002 has undergone its first updates. The listing of **Local Choice Programs for 2002-2003** and the **FAMIS & Medicaid Contact Numbers** pages, both located in the Helpful Information section, were both

changed in late September. Section 2 will be updated shortly.

Check [www.signupnowva.org/toolkit.asp](http://www.signupnowva.org/toolkit.asp) for the most recent updates. Any items that have been changed will be followed by the tag **(updated x/x/xx)**.

### Did you know?

If you are applying for Medicaid for a pregnant teenager, use the application entitled "Medicaid Application/Redetermination for Medically Indigent Pregnant Woman" and apply through the local Department of Social Services (DSS). This application will be processed within 10 days rather than the 45-days that the *Application for Children's Health Insurance* takes through DSS.

Applying this way also has the added benefit that due to the category of Medicaid that this teen is enrolled into, her baby will also be enrolled in Medicaid for one year after birth. Once that year is up, the mother can then apply for continued coverage through Medicaid or FAMIS, if her income qualifies her, for her child using the *Application for Children's Health Insurance*.

**Preparation of this newsletter was assisted by a grant from  
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Winter 2003



# SignUpNow Outreach

Communities Connecting Kids With Health Coverage

## FAMIS & Medicaid Changes to be Considered by 2003 General Assembly

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

Although Virginia's fiscal crisis will dominate the 2003 General Assembly Session, the Virginia Coalition for Children's Health (VCCH) will promote various program improvements in FAMIS and Medicaid. The VCCH supports the following changes:

**An "Umbrella Program" Name for both Medicaid and FAMIS.** Now that the application procedures for Medicaid and FAMIS have been streamlined and unified, enrollment and retention in the programs could be improved by using **one name** to refer to "Children's Health Insurance." If a single program name was promoted in the media and in outreach efforts, families and the public could clearly identify the state-funded program that provides excellent health insurance to Virginia's children.

**A uniform package of mental health services** to children in Virginia, through Medicaid, FAMIS (Fee-for-Service) and FAMIS (Managed Care). This would assure continuity of care, support **cost-effective** community-based mental health care, and save expenditures of state-only funds.

**12 months continuous coverage in Medicaid and FAMIS.** Families with fluctuating income must report those changes to Social Services or the Central Processing Unit. As a result, children are shifted between Medicaid and FAMIS or temporarily terminated from coverage. Twelve-month coverage would provide insurance for a full year, regardless of changes in family size or income. This would provide continuity of care for children, eliminate burdensome administrative

requirements and **save administrative dollars**. At least 27 states utilize 12-month coverage in their SCHIP and/or Medicaid programs.

**A shortened waiting period for previously insured children in FAMIS.** While the legislature has reduced the original 12-month waiting period and has adopted additional exceptions to the rule, some children are still barred from the program because of previous insurance. Thirty-five states have either no waiting period, or a waiting period shorter than 6 months. Virginia's waiting period should be reduced or eliminated entirely.

**Presumptive eligibility.** The primary purpose of presumptive eligibility is to allow a provider who treats a child who appears to be eligible for FAMIS or Medicaid to receive reimbursement, even though the application process has not been completed. The child gets health care, the provider gets paid, and the family is encouraged to complete the full process. The state would **save money** if state-funded health entities such as teaching hospitals and health departments could presumptively enroll children.

**Improved enrollment for newborns.** A FAMIS application must be filed during the month of birth, in order for birth-related pediatric expenses to be covered. This policy is a problem, particularly when a child is born during the last few days of a month. The problem could be addressed by using presumptive eligibility or changing the application

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SignUpNow Tool Kit

## 2003 General Assembly

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process for newborns. Since these babies are already counted in projected expenditures, the cost of necessary administrative changes should be minimal. Moreover, these changes could **save money** currently expended on indigent care.

Several of these recommendations have recently been supported by the legislative Joint Commission on Health Care (JCHC). The JCHC staff issued a report on FAMIS in September. (*Available at <http://legis.state.va.us/jchc>.)* On November 6<sup>th</sup>, the JCHC voted to support an "omnibus" FAMIS bill that includes a number of the changes.

On the positive side, the omnibus bill would adopt a single name for FAMIS/Medicaid, require use of one application for both programs, lower the waiting period in FAMIS to 4 months, and improve mental health services in FAMIS.

However, the JCHC did not support 12-month coverage or presumptive

eligibility and also voted for a \$25 annual enrollment fee for FAMIS families. This enrollment fee could be a barrier to enrollment and would probably cost the state more to administer than the amounts collected. The VCCH believes any enrollment fee should be tied to 12-month coverage.

In addition, the JCHC adopted a controversial provision which would extend FAMIS coverage to a "child" from "conception to age 19." This definition is permitted by new federal regulations. It is a way to provide prenatal care to low income women (including non-citizens) with income up to 200% of the poverty line, who do not qualify for Medicaid (which covers pregnant women up to 133% of the poverty line). However, pro-choice advocates are very troubled by the implications of enrolling the unborn in a health insurance program. Since expanding prenatal care is not a priority for the VCCH this year, the Coalition will not take a position on this proposal.

## Complete the Application via Computer

By **Kim Bemberis**,  
Project Coordinator,  
*SignUpNow*

SignUpNow has created a version of the *Application for Children's Health Insurance* that can be completed using a computer and Adobe Acrobat Reader (version 5.0 or later). The Department of Medical Assistance Services has given their approval for the use of this computer application. SignUpNow is making this file available to community-based organizations that are helping families apply for Virginia's health insurance programs for children.

The application (a PDF file with text fields and check boxes) can be filled out on the computer and then printed out so applicants may affix their signature. Once paystubs and other verifications are attached, the application can be submitted (via fax or mail) to the FAMIS CPU or a local Department of Social Services.

If you are interested in getting a copy of the file for your organization, contact SignUpNow at (804) 828-6062 for a user agreement.

## Uninsured Children in Virginia — Revising the Estimates

New estimates of uninsured children statewide and by locality will be available soon. The final touches are being made and the detailed methodology behind the numbers is being written.

The Department of Medical Assistance Services will publish these new numbers shortly and use them in monthly enrollment reports.

In January, SignUpNow will produce a special issue brief on these estimates that will include the methodology behind the calculations and "Frequently Asked Questions" regarding the data.

Stay tuned!



## Update on VHCF's Child Health Insurance Initiatives

By **Kim McGaughey**,  
Director of  
Child Health  
Insurance  
Initiatives,  
Virginia Health  
Care Foundation

Over 10,840 uninsured children have been enrolled in FAMIS and Medicaid through local projects of two special initiatives of the Virginia Health Care Foundation (VHCF): *Project Connect*, launched in 1999; and the new Robert Wood Johnson's *Covering Kids & Families* initiative, funded in July 2002.

VHCF grantees promote community awareness on the importance of health care insurance and their availability to assist families locally in enrolling their children. They work closely with schools, medical providers, child care providers, faith-based organizations and businesses to identify uninsured children. Specially trained outreach workers then work directly with families to help enroll their children in either FAMIS or Medicaid. Grantees play a critical role in documenting problems and testing solutions to spark program and policy changes at the state level.

### Grants Awarded

Seven projects were awarded **Project Connect** grant funds for one year since the last SUN newsletter — two new projects (indicated with a \*) and five continued projects — in partnership with the Department of Medical Assistance Services. These projects include:

**Alexandria Neighborhood Health Services.** *Serving Alexandria.*  
Contact: (703) 519-1725

**CHIP/Healthy Families of Chesapeake.** *Serving Chesapeake.*  
Contact: (757) 543-9100

**CHIP of Greater Richmond.\***  
*Serving Richmond city.*  
Contact: (804) 233-2850

**CHIP of the Roanoke Valley.**  
*Serving Botetourt, Craig, Roanoke city and county, and Salem.*  
Contact: (540) 857-6993

**Cumberland Plateau Health District.** *Serving Russell (276) 889-7621; Buchanan (276) 935-4591; Dickenson (276) 926-4979; Tazewell,*

*Smyth and Wise counties (276) 988-5583.*  
**Stafford County Schools Head Start.** *Serving Stafford.*  
Contact: (540) 368-2559

**Urban League of Greater Richmond.\*** *Serving Richmond city.*  
Contact: (804) 649-8407

### Coalition Meets

The **Virginia Covering Kids & Families (CKF) Coalition** is excited to announce that in the past three months Virginia has enrolled 21% (or 16,539 children) of its goal to enroll 80,227 uninsured children in FAMIS and Medicaid across the state by June 2006. The 37-member *CKF Coalition* serves as the governing body for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation initiative to dramatically improve state health insurance coverage for children across Virginia over the next four years.

At its December meeting, the *CKF Coalition* established two new task forces to work on issues. Jon Nafziger, United Way, Thomas Jefferson Area, is chairing the Outreach, Enrollment and Re-enrollment Task Force. Brian Yanofchick, Bon Secours Hampton Roads, is chairing the Value, Access and Utilization of Health Services Task Force.

We are grateful that *CKF* funds now help support SignUpNow to provide statewide outreach, training and technical assistance. These funds also support the production and distribution of the SUN newsletter starting with this issue.

**For more information on the Virginia Health Care Foundation's Child Health Insurance Initiatives, contact Kim McGaughey at (804) 828-5804 or kim@vhcf.org.**

## Congratulations!



**Melissa Weedon**, formerly with the *Project Connect* project at Quin Rivers Community Action Agency, has taken a job as an Outreach Coordinator for the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS). Though her expertise in the private sector will be missed, she is a great asset to the Outreach Department at DMAS. Housed at DMAS' regional office in Roanoke, Melissa is working on building children's health insurance outreach coalitions in the Abingdon/Bristol and Covington areas. Melissa can be reached by calling (540) 857-6544 or e-mailing [mweedon@dmass.state.va.us](mailto:mweedon@dmass.state.va.us).

**Linda Nablo**, former Project Director of SignUpNow, has taken the position of Director of the Child Health Insurance Program at the Department of Medical Assistance Services. In her position, Linda oversees the administration of the FAMIS Central Processing Unit, the Child Health Outreach Department, and policy and implementation of Virginia's Child Health Insurance Programs. While Linda will be greatly missed at SignUpNow, her presence in this position completes an effective and informed team now in place at DMAS.

## Letter from DMAS

By **Pat Finnerty**,  
Director,  
Department  
of Medical  
Assistance  
Services  
(DMAS)

**December 2002**

*Dear Community Partners,*

*I am pleased to have this opportunity to let you know that the September changes to the FAMIS program have been an immediate success! In the months of September and October alone, we have increased the net enrollment of children in either Medicaid or FAMIS by nearly 11,000 children. These numbers far exceed our expectations. This success is directly attributed to the improved coordination between the Medicaid and FAMIS program, the "Back-to-School" campaign, and your outreach efforts. I really appreciate your continued dedication and support.*

*As I said in the July newsletter, the key to the continued success will be open communication between all parties. Therefore, please continue to let us know of any enrollment problems you experience or any technical assistance you require. My staff is currently reviewing all aspects of the enrollment process, including the activities of the FAMIS Central Processing Unit, to determine if additional improvements are warranted. We look forward to hearing your input.*

*The children's health insurance program will continue to thrive under the leadership of our new FAMIS director, Linda Nablo. As you are aware, Linda will bring years of experience on child health insurance issues to the department. Linda will lead the Department's efforts not only in enrolling children, but also keeping children enrolled to improve their overall health status. Please join me in welcoming Linda to her new position.*

*Thank you for your efforts on behalf of the children of Virginia.*



## Free Outreach Materials Available

**Free** promotional materials for Virginia's Child Health Insurance Programs are available from the state. Orders are placed through DMAS' mail house, Commonwealth/Martin, and you may **call your order in to (804) 780-0076 or FAX your written order in to (804) 780-0198**. A faxable order form is available on the SignUpNow web site at [www.signupnowva.org/toolkit.asp](http://www.signupnowva.org/toolkit.asp).

Items currently available are: the **Application for Children's Health**

**Insurance** (English and Spanish versions), an updated **FAMIS brochure** (English and Spanish), **FAMIS Posters**, and **Mailing Inserts**.

When contacting Commonwealth/Martin give your name, mailing address (street address), telephone number and whether you need the items by a certain date. Items are shipped via UPS. For ease of filling orders, please order items in multiples of 100.

