

SignUpNow



Outreach

Communities Connecting Kids With Health Coverage

Update from the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS)

By Linda Nablo,
Director, Division of
Child Health Insurance,
DMAS



Inside:

Virginia Coalition for
Children's Health
2004 Platform

Did you know?

New Faces in Child
Health Insurance

Project Connect

The State of Child
Health Insurance
in Virginia

Keep 'Em Covered!

On November 1st, 14 local Departments of Social Services (DSSs) started undertaking an exciting new initiative to keep eligible children enrolled in FAMIS Plus and/or FAMIS. Each month, through aggressive state and local efforts, thousands of new children are enrolled in the program; however, thousands more are canceled and lose coverage. Sometimes the cancellation is for a good reason – parents are earning more money; the family no longer needs the state's assistance; or the child has just grown up. But far too often it is because the family fails to complete the annual renewal process. Even if the child is later reenrolled, there can be a gap in needed medical care, unpaid bills, and unnecessary paperwork for the family and the local agency.

To address this problem, DMAS made one-year demonstration grants available for local DSS offices to develop and test innovate strategies to improve retention rates in child health insurance. Unfortunately, because of limited funds, not all the local agencies that were interested in participating could be funded. However, the 14 projects that were selected by an impartial panel represent a broad array of localities and ideas. DMAS will monitor the grants and arrange for technical assistance for these retention projects. Through this initiative DMAS and DSS hope to identify cost-effective best practices for local agencies to use to keep eligible kids enrolled.

The local DSS offices that will receive funding for this initiative are:

- Albemarle County*
- Amherst/Nelson Counties*
- Arlington County*
- Dinwiddie County*
- Fairfax County*
- Fauquier County*
- Greensville County/Emporia*
- Hanover County*
- Henrico County*
- Henry County/Martinsville*
- James City County*
- City of Norfolk*
- Pulaski County*
- Westmoreland County*



Staff Changes

Rebecca Mendoza has joined the Child Health Insurance Division at DMAS as the new Outreach Manager for the Children's Health Insurance Program. Many may already know Rebecca as she was formerly the Outreach and Education Manager for Concera Corp. when they administered the Medicaid Managed Care contract for DMAS and, for the last year, she supervised the Eligibility Unit at the FAMIS Central Processing Unit. This unique combination of experience allows Rebecca to bring valuable knowledge about both outreach and the FAMIS program to her new position.

As Outreach Manager, Rebecca will supervise the DMAS Outreach staff and the state's marketing campaign for FAMIS. In addition, she will oversee DMAS supported community-based

Continued on page 4



Cover The Uninsured Week

Planning an outreach event?
Why not have it during
Cover the Uninsured Week May 10-16, 2004?
Stay tuned for more information in the coming months...

Virginia Coalition for Children's Health

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

The Virginia Coalition for Children's Health (VCCH), the group responsible for advocating for child health insurance issues during the Virginia General Assembly is gearing up for the 2004 legislative session.

Past Successes

During last year's session, 58 organizations came together to support such things as: reducing the 6 month waiting period in FAMIS to 4 months, increasing mental health benefits in FAMIS to conform with those covered in Medicaid, and adoption of 12-month continuous eligibility in FAMIS.

As a result of all the legislative and administrative changes adopted in FAMIS and FAMIS Plus (Medicaid), Virginia has made extraordinary progress enrolling children. More than 67,026 children have been enrolled in Virginia's child health insurance programs since September 1, 2002 -- the date when several major policy and program changes were instituted. As of December 1, 2003, 364,058 children were enrolled in Virginia's child health insurance programs, representing 88% of the estimated eligible uninsured children.

2004 Platform

Of course, many challenges remain, such as enrolling the remaining 55,500 eligible uninsured children; retaining coverage for enrolled children; and tackling barriers to accessing care. New focus areas are reflected in the VCCH Platform for 2004 on the facing page. It includes statements about offering health insurance to more pregnant women (to achieve healthier birth outcomes) and improving access to dental care -- which has been a huge problem in many parts of the Commonwealth.

Please join the Coalition for 2004 by completing and returning the Sign-Up form on the facing page. We cannot include your organization without a signed authorization.

Remember - Even if your organization cannot be a part of the Coalition, you as an individual can contact your legislator to support child health insurance issues.

Virginia Coalition for Children's Health 2004 Platform

The VCCH has developed its 2004 Legislative Platform which will be promoted in the General Assembly. It is time for organizations to join/rejoin the Coalition for 2004. 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 many organizations will join 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; 2) to support the enrollment of eligible children into those programs; and 3) to improve children's health by insuring access to quality services.

The VCCH supports the following objectives:

1. *Streamlined application procedures and the coordination of the Family Access to Medical Insurance Security Program (FAMIS) and FAMIS Plus (Medicaid)*
While recent legislative and administrative changes have greatly improved application procedures and coordination, several additional improvements would be helpful.

Implement presumptive eligibility, which would allow certain entities (such as hospitals) to enroll and treat children before their applications are completely processed.

Implement 12 months continuous coverage for FAMIS Plus eligible children to secure a medical home for the child and avoid the administrative costs of processing changes in circumstances and shifting children between programs and providers.

2. *Improved Access to Health Insurance and Services*

Expand access to prenatal care for low income women.

Improve access to dental health services.

3. *Comprehensive Outreach Activities and Funding for those Activities*

Continue statewide media campaign and support of local outreach efforts to identify/enroll eligible children, and assist with retention and post-enrollment issues.

Utilize the full 10% of Title XXI expenditures (as permitted by federal law) for additional outreach activities.

Update role of DMAS Outreach Oversight Committee

4. *Better Data Collection and Evaluation*

DMAS should maintain a longitudinal database which can accurately track applications, denials, redeterminations, and utilization of health services.

The Following Organization Supports the 2004 Platform of the Virginia Coalition for Children's Health and Authorizes Participation as a Member Organization.

Organization:

Contact Person:

Address:

Phone:

Fax:

E-Mail:

Authorizing Signature:

Please remove this page, complete the needed information, and fax it to Kim Bemberis at SignUpNow (804) 828-4370.



New Workers in Child Health Insurance Outreach

VHCF's Child Health Insurance Initiatives Addition

Joanne Greene has joined the Virginia Health Care Foundation (VHCF) staff as program manager for *Project Connect* and trainer for *SignUpNow*. In the past, Joanne received VHCF's Child Health Superhero Award for her leadership of the *Project Connect* project at Johnson Health Center that enrolled over 2,300 children. Joanne brings solid expertise on Virginia's child health insurance programs, effective outreach strategies, and community organizing. Working out of Lynchburg, Joanne can be reached at (434) 851-1376 or joanne1204@att.net.

New Workers Join the *Project Connect* Team

VHCF welcomes the following outreach workers to its *Project Connect* family.

Mayra Granados joined CHIP of Greater Richmond as a bilingual Outreach Worker in September.

Beckie Lambert began as an Outreach Coordinator with the Cumberland Plateau Health District at Clinch River Community Action in Tazewell in mid-November. She is in charge of outreach in Smyth and Tazewell Counties.

Carol Jones, Tiara Lockett, and **Angela O'Boyle** joined the Consortium for Infant and Child Health's (CINCH) outreach team in November. They will be working with families in Hampton Roads.

Iman Shabazz has just joined the Urban League of Greater Richmond as an outreach worker.

DMAS Outreach Manager

Rebecca Mendoza has joined the DMAS staff as the Child Health Insurance Program Outreach Manager. *For more information on Rebecca see the cover article.*

We wish these dedicated professionals a warm welcome to the world of child health insurance outreach.



DMAS Update

Continued from front cover

outreach conducted through the *Project Connect* initiative, administered by the Virginia Health Care Foundation, and the new *Keep 'Em Covered!* initiative being implemented by some local DSS offices. Rebecca will also provide staff support for the FAMIS Outreach Oversight Committee and collaborate with the *Virginia Covering Kids & Families* Initiative to ensure comprehensive statewide outreach through effective coordination of public and private efforts.

Rebecca may be reached by calling (804) 786-3206 or by e-mailing rebecca.mendoza@dmass.virginia.gov.

Tom Edicola, former Outreach Manager for DMAS, will now transition more fully into his new position as Operations Manager for the Child Health Insurance Program.

In other good news, **Andy Feagans** and **Olivia Dickerson** have been hired as permanent state employees to serve as Outreach Liaisons for DMAS. Both Andy and Olivia have been with the FAMIS program for some time as part-time wage employees but, given their new status, will now be able to assume more responsibilities for the outreach program.

In a time when many other states are pulling back, reducing benefits, and cutting outreach, these hirings once again demonstrate the solid commitment of this administration to the Children's Health Insurance Program in Virginia.



SignUpNow On the Road Again...



Workshops

SignUpNow is again travelling the Commonwealth conducting child health insurance workshops. Recently, SignUpNow held workshops in Lynchburg, Danville, Charlottesville, Galax, Norfolk, Alexandria and Harrisonburg. Upcoming localities include Radford, Roanoke, Richmond, Petersburg and Abingdon.

In addition to the introductory workshop for those new to the topic of Virginia's child health insurance programs, SignUpNow is also offering a workshop on the enrollment and post-enrollment managed care processes for

experienced workers. For the most up to date listing of SignUpNow trainings visit:

www.signupnowva.org/calendar.asp.

Tool Kit

SignUpNow has posted the full contents of the revised *Tool Kit* on its web site. To find this information go to:

www.signupnowva.org/toolkit.asp.

Believe it or not there have actually been additional changes to the *Kit* since the major revision in August! Things that have been updated will be followed by a date in parenthesis.

Did you know?

New information and clarifications to the FAMIS and FAMIS Plus programs.

New Income Verification Policy

The VA Department of Social Services (DSS) has made a change to the income verification policy for FAMIS and FAMIS Plus that went into effect on December 1, 2003. Under the new policy if both the applicant and the local DSS have been unsuccessful in verifying income from an employer, **as a last resort** the applicant may write a statement of how much they make and submit that as proof of income.

Information on this new policy can be found in the Medicaid Manual, Section M07- Families And Children Income, M0720.100 Wages - General, page 2, letter C. This manual is posted in full on the DSS web site www.dss.state.va.us/benefit/medicaid_manual.html.

New Materials Available

New child health insurance posters and Spanish-language brochures are now available from the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services' (DMAS) mailhouse Commonwealth Martin (804) 780-0076.

To help control cost, quantity limits have been placed on materials available

through Commonwealth Martin (applications, brochures, posters). There are separate limits for local DSSs and for other organizations. *Please note: if you are ordering materials for a specific event and need a larger quantity of items, these limits may be overridden by contacting Pam Howze [(804) 371-8684 or pam.howze@dmas.virginia.gov] or Andy Feagans [(804) 786-0166 or andrew.feagans@dmas.virginia.gov] at DMAS.*

In addition, DMAS has produced 2 new 1-page flyers that are available on the FAMIS web site (www.famis.org/English/Materials.htm) in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, Farsi and Arabic. The **FAMIS Informational Flyer** is a general program description regarding FAMIS and FAMIS Plus. The **FAMIS Immigration Flyer** indicates the differences in immigrant eligibility between the FAMIS and FAMIS Plus programs for use with non-citizen populations. These flyers are for community workers to download and reproduce for their clients. DMAS recommends copying the English text on one side of the page and the foreign language of choice on the reverse.



Project Connect

By Joanne Green,
Project Connect
Program Manager,
*Virginia Health Care
Foundation (VHCF)*



Congratulations to the *Project Connect* grantees! They have helped enroll over 16,000 children in Virginia's state-sponsored child health insurance programs since 1999. In the past year alone, they have helped enroll over 5,530 children, compared to an average annual enrollment of 3,637 during the prior three years, representing a 50% increase!

Given this success, VHCF was delighted to extend the *Project Connect* initiative through June 2004, thanks to continued funding from the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services. Funds were targeted strategically to continue successful outreach projects serving areas with the highest numbers of uninsured children and to expand projects geographically to serve neighboring high need areas wherever possible.

The ten *Project Connect* grantees, serving 38 localities across the Commonwealth are listed below. New localities are in bold.

Alexandria Neighborhood Health Services, Inc. (*Alexandria, **Arlington***);

CHIP/Healthy Families of Chesapeake (*Chesapeake*);

CHIP of Greater Richmond (*Richmond, **Chesterfield**, and **Henrico***);

CHIP of the Roanoke Valley (*Botetourt, Craig, **Franklin**, Roanoke City/County, and Salem*);

Consortium for Infant and Child Health (***Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach***);

Cumberland Plateau Health District (*Buchanan, Dickenson, **Lee**, Russell, Smyth, Tazewell, Wise and Norton*);

Johnson Health Center (*Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford City/County, Campbell, **Henry, Pittsylvania, Danville**, Lynchburg, and **Martinsville***);

Partnership for Healthier Kids (*Fairfax City/County, Loudoun*);

United Way-Thomas Jefferson Area (***Rockingham** and **Harrisonburg***); and

Urban League of Greater Richmond (*Richmond City*)

The primary purpose of these projects continues to be providing direct application assistance for enrolling children. However, the projects also provide critical input to decision-makers on improving program operations and policies based on real experiences encountered by families. Their role has also been expanded to work closely with the schools, local departments of social services, health care providers, and other community organizations to help incorporate enrollment and retention assistance into routine community activities.

Kudos to the Radford University Project

One of the three *Virginia Covering Kids & Families* pilot projects, the Radford University FAMIS Outreach Project has been awarded a \$125,000 *Covering Kids and Families Access Initiative* grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Radford project is one of 25 *Access Initiative* grants throughout the nation.

During this 2-year initiative, Radford will identify and document barriers families face after enrolling in state-sponsored health insurance programs. The project will also test strategies to improve access to health care services through FAMIS and FAMIS Plus in Southwest Virginia. Radford University students and faculty will be involved throughout the project. The grant findings will be shared with the *Virginia Covering Kids & Families Coalition* and disseminated in Virginia and nationwide.

The RU FAMIS Outreach Project serves Carroll, Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski and Wythe counties and the cities of Galax and Radford.

The State of Child Health Insurance In Virginia

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

Enrollments Continue to Increase Dramatically

Virginia continues to make extraordinary progress on enrolling children in state sponsored health insurance programs. Over 67,000 children were enrolled in just 15 months! To put this in perspective, before September 1, 2002, it took nine months to enroll just 10,000 children. The growth in enrollment has truly been dramatic. In the 13 months prior to September 1st, the monthly net enrollment averaged 1,526 children. During the past 15 months, the net enrollment has averaged 4,917 children monthly.

What Caused These Extraordinary Increases?

There have been multiple reasons for the dramatic increases:

- Strong leadership demonstrated by DMAS, in close collaboration with private sector outreach efforts.
- Major policy and program changes instituted September 1, 2002 and August 1, 2003, simplifying the enrollment process, re-engaging local departments of social services, and improving coordination across FAMIS and Medicaid/FAMIS Plus.
- New estimates of the number of eligible uninsured children, enabling the state and localities to measure progress and track the impact of changes.
- Major statewide outreach campaigns implemented by state government in partnership with the private sector (*e.g. Back-to-School Campaign, October Child Health Month, Covering the Uninsured Week*).
- Major improvements implemented at the FAMIS CPU.

National Recognition

Virginia was recognized for its "extraordinary achievement in reorganizing its children's health insurance program" at a national press conference on July 29th by James Tallon, Jr., Chairman of the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured. Virginia's significant reforms are highlighted in the Commission's national report, *Preserving Recent Progress for Health Coverage of Children and Parents: New Tensions Emerge*.

Continuing to Tackle Major Challenges

The Virginia Covering Kids & Families Coalition, comprised of 38 member organizations, developed an ambitious work plan for the next two years collaborating with key state agencies and several other initiatives across the Commonwealth to reduce overlap and maximize impact.

Some areas Virginia is already aggressively pursuing include:

- Enrolling the remaining 55,500 eligible uninsured children.
- Defining the scope of the retention problem in Virginia and identifying effective strategies for retaining health insurance coverage of children.
- Finalizing a training tool that diagrams the application and post-enrollment processes to educate workers who assist families.
- Identifying the barriers and simplifying the process for children to access care.

With this ambitious new work plan and with all partners committed to continue working together, children's health insurance in Virginia is poised and moving aggressively forward in creating another successful year.



c/o Virginia Health Care Foundation
1001 E. Broad Street, Suite 445
Richmond, VA 23219
(804) 828-6062 (804) 828-4370 FAX
signupnow@vhcf.org
www.signupnowva.org

Has your address recently changed?

Please help SignUpNow keep you informed by updating your contact information, especially your e-mail address!

Send updates to signupnow@vhcf.org or call (804) 828-6062.

Look for FAMIS in Virginia State Tax Booklets!

Thank you to the Virginia Department of Taxation for including a statement that promotes "Health Insurance for Low-Income Children" in two tax instruction booklets that are being mailed to 25% of Virginia taxpayers. Asking the question *Does your child need health insurance?*, the statement refers families to their local department of social services or the FAMIS web site (www.FAMIS.org) to learn if their children may qualify.

This initiates an exciting new partnership that will encourage families to consider health insurance as they calculate their income for the tax year. Income verification remains a difficult hoop for many families in obtaining FAMIS.

Thanks...



To Our VCKF Partners

Preparation of this newsletter was assisted by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Princeton, NJ. Additional support was provided by: Roy R. Charles Charitable Trust, Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, MAMSI, Capital One, and the Carilion Foundation.

To SignUpNow's Partners

Centra Foundation, Inova Health System, Mary Washington Hospital Foundation, Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services, Williamsburg Community Health Foundation, and the Virginia Primary Care Association.