

SignUpNow



Outreach

Communities Connecting Kids With Health Coverage

To all those helping Virginia families secure health insurance for their children – I want you to know that my administration will be committed to working with you. The first-step will be to make Virginia’s publicly funded health insurance programs for children truly family-friendly. It should never be difficult for an eligible child to obtain state-sponsored health insurance.

I look forward to working with caring Virginians in the legislature, state and local agencies, the Virginia Health Care Foundation, SignUpNow, and in hospitals, schools, churches, and community programs across the Commonwealth to ensure that Virginia’s children receive the health care they need and deserve.

– Mark Warner, Governor-elect



FAMIS

By Linda Nablo,
Project Director,
SignUpNow

On January 12, 2002, Mark R. Warner will be sworn in as Governor of Virginia and many child advocates inside and outside state government anticipate that his administration will bring further modifications to Virginia’s health insurance programs for children.

Policy changes are also impacting enrollment. While advocates report that the elimination of a requirement to cooperate with child support enforcement and a reduced waiting period since previous health insurance encourages families to apply, the new separation between the Medicaid and FAMIS programs and the imposition of monthly premiums for families over 150% of the federal poverty level are creating new barriers for many. In fact, over 3,000 children were scheduled to lose their FAMIS coverage at the end of December due to non-payment of premiums. Fortunately, Secretary of Health and Human Services Louis Rossiter announced a 60-day delay in terminating these cases. This will allow the incoming administration to more fully study the issue before children lose coverage.

Policy and procedural changes are already being recommended to the new administration for program improvements. SignUpNow will keep you informed of any changes through this newsletter and via the new project web site at www.signupnowva.org.



Virginia still has a long way to go to get this program right but together we will make it happen – we can’t afford not to.

Inside:

Enrollment Update

Next Round of Workshops

FAMIS Clarifications

The Virginia Coalition for Children’s Health 2002

JLARC Study

Project Connect

Covering Kids & Families

SignUpNow Gets a New Web Site

On August 1, 2001, the Family Access to Medical Insurance Security plan (FAMIS) replaced the two and a half year old CMSIP program as Virginia’s Title XXI program. Families across Virginia began calling the Central Processing Unit at 1(866) 87-FAMIS to inquire about coverage for their children. While the volume of calls far exceeded expectations and caused some “system overload,” the number of children enrolled in FAMIS has grown to 36,119 as of December 7. This is an increase of approximately 3,253 since July 2001 when the program was converted. Many community workers helping families apply report that the new program utilizes an easier application, requires less documentation from families, and the call-in application process is much faster and easier for families to use. However, there are also numerous reports of confusion, misinformation, and frustrating delays being experienced by families.



Virginia's Total FAMIS Enrollment as of November 30, 2001 is 34,996 or 43%.

Congratulations! Arlington County and the cities of Manassas and Fairfax have all reached over 100% enrollment and continue to find and enroll eligible children (103%, 114%, and 130% respectively).

The following localities have achieved higher than 70% FAMIS enrollment: the counties of Appomattox, Cumberland, Fairfax, King & Queen, Lancaster, Prince William, Stafford, and the cities of Alexandria, Manassas Park and Williamsburg.

An additional 29 localities are between 50% and 70%!

To check your area's progress, visit the SignUpNow web site at www.signupnowva.org

Did you know?

The Social Security Administration and Insure Kids Now have partnered together to send out informational announcements about the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). From December 2001 through February 2002, 46 million Americans who receive social security checks will also receive a letter informing them that their children or grandchildren may be eligible for health insurance. Information on SCHIP will be on the cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) notices. This is the second year for the partnership. (Source: HRSA)

SignUpNow Workshops

Next Round of FAMIS & Medicaid Workshops

The next round of SignUpNow Workshops, made possible through funding from the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) and local foundations, will begin early in the new year.

Being Scheduled:

Alexandria, Danville, Norton, and Winchester.

Already Scheduled:

Petersburg on February 6th from 8:30-12:30AM at Southside Regional Medical Center in the Private Dining Room. Limit 50 people. *Made possible through funding from Southside Regional Medical Center and the John Randolph Foundation.*

If you can help us secure a location for the "being scheduled" workshops or want to register for the Petersburg Workshop, please contact SignUpNow at (804) 965-1352 or signupnow@vhha.com.



Comments from Attendees:

[The presenter was] very clear-fantastic wordsmith... [I] came here, expected to be bored, and was anything but...

[The SignUpNow] Tool Kit is GREAT! I have been involved as a Public Health Nurse for 20 years and [have] never been presented with such [a] comprehensive, organized tool...

Workshops Get High Marks

To help communities learn about FAMIS, SignUpNow conducted 22 community-wide FAMIS & Medicaid Workshops from July 10 through October 18, 2001. Response to these workshops was overwhelming – resulting in more than 1,100 people being trained on application and outreach procedures on the new FAMIS program and on MI Medicaid for children. At many of the locations, people had to be placed on a waiting list due to lack of space.

Participants at the workshops rated the experience very highly. 97% of attendees completed an evaluation form. Overall, 98% of respondents rated the workshop as "Excellent" or "Very Good."



DMAS Clarifies FAMIS Issues

Good Cause Exception for Non-Payment of FAMIS Premiums

A good cause for non-payment is due to circumstances beyond the family's control. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Serious physical or mental incapacity or illness
2. Voluntary disenrollment because the family mistakenly believed that other health coverage was available
3. The family did not receive a regular source of income during the time period in question
4. The family had an unexpected, unforeseen occurrence that affected them financially for the period in question; e.g. a fire, a death, etc.
5. The family was inappropriately removed from the program.

To claim good cause the family must write out the reason for their claim, attest to its truthfulness in writing, and sign it. The family then mails this letter to the **FAMIS Operations Manager, DMAS Program Operations, 600 E. Broad Street, 12th Floor, Richmond, VA 23219**. [Include the child's name and id# in the statement.] The statement will be evaluated by DMAS staff within 10 working days of receipt and the answer will be provided in writing. DMAS has the authority to adjust or forgive premium payments when good cause is established.

If the family disagrees with the initial decision, they can then request a review (by contacting the DMAS appeals division) within 30 days of receipt of their initial decision.

Who Can Drop Insurance for a Child Without Kicking In the 6-month Waiting Period?

A child is not eligible for the FAMIS program if the child had creditable health insurance coverage, held by the child's "family member", and the insurance was dropped without good cause within six months of application for FAMIS.

A "family member" is defined as a parent or stepparent who lives with the child.

An absent parent, or a grandparent, is not considered a "family member." So if grandmother, who had been paying for health insurance for her grandchild, drops this insurance, the child would not be subject to the 6-month waiting period.

Fluctuating Income

The Eligibility Specialists at the FAMIS CPU have been instructed to inquire if the income reported by a caller represents "usual" family income. If not, "income averaging" will be conducted by the CPU to determine a fair representation of family income.

If you attended a training, especially if it was prior to September, please visit our web site (www.signupnowva.org) in late January. There you will find the complete text of the *Tool Kit* and can download the updated text.

SignUpNow Tool Kit Updates

FAMIS is a program in flux. Since SignUpNow began conducting FAMIS and Medicaid Workshops in July, there has already been one major change to the plan and several clarifications to policy. The SignUpNow *Tool Kit*, the manual distributed at the trainings, has already undergone one revision.

Ordering FAMIS Materials



Free promotional materials for the FAMIS program are now available from the state through the printer/mail house Commonwealth Mailing Systems, Inc./Martin Publishing. Now, instead of ordering items on-line at the FAMIS web site, call or fax your order in to Commonwealth/Martin. Items that are available include: **brochures** (available in Arabic, English, Farsi, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese), **mailing inserts** (English/Spanish), **posters** (English/Spanish) and **applications** (English and Spanish). When calling, 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 all items (excluding posters) in multiples of 100.

Call your order in to (804) 780-0076

FAX your written order in to (804) 780-0198

Note: SignUpNow has an order form you can download listing all available free FAMIS materials. This document will be on our web site in late January (www.signupnowva.org) and on the FAMIS web site (www.famis.org) in the near future.

The Virginia Coalition for Children's Health

By Christopher Bailey,
Senior Vice President,
*Virginia Hospital
& Healthcare
Association (VHHA)*

Did you know that there was a coalition of organizations concerned with children's health issues in Virginia?

In 1997, over 100 organizations came together to form the Virginia Coalition for Children's Health (The Coalition) to ensure that Virginia take full advantage of a new federal initiative to provide health insurance programs for the uninsured children of lower income working families. The Coalition worked tirelessly during the 1998 General Assembly Session to ensure that Virginia adopt a program that provided the best package of benefits for the greatest possible number of uninsured children. Recognizing that legislation alone will not ensure that children receive the health care, The Coalition also launched the statewide outreach initiative, SignUpNow.

At the initiation of the Governor, the 2000 Virginia General Assembly passed legislation that renamed and significantly revamped the existing CMSIP program into the FAMIS plan. The Coalition played a key role in passage of this legislation. Working closely with the patrons, The Coalition helped to amend the original proposal to incorporate several child/consumer protections, to ensure adoption of the final bill, and to secure additional funding for the program.

The Coalition is currently gearing up for the 2002 legislative session. 2001 member organizations are asked to renew their membership by signing on to the 2002 Platform and new membership is encouraged. Governor-elect Warner included children's health insurance in his platform and promised to cover more children. Several important changes could be made administratively – others will need legislative approval. The Virginia Coalition for Children's Health needs your support. A brief version of the 2002 Platform is listed below.

2002 Platform

Overall Goals:

To maintain and improve Virginia's health insurance programs for children.

To support the enrollment of eligible children into those programs.

The Coalition supports the following objectives through legislative or administrative actions:

1. Streamlined application procedures and the coordination of Medicaid and the Family Access to Medical Insurance Security Program (FAMIS)
2. Improved access to health insurance and services
3. Comprehensive outreach activities and funding for those activities
4. Better data collection and evaluation

If your organization would like to become a member of The Coalition, contact Kim at SignUpNow (804) 965-1352 or e-mail signupnow@vhha.com, for a more detailed platform and sign-up sheet.

JLARC Report on Children's Health Insurance Highlights Policy Issues and Loss of Federal Funds

By Jill Hanken,
Staff Attorney,
Virginia Poverty Law
Center (VPLC)

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) issued an interim report on December 10 which evaluates several programs operated by the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS). In its review of CMSIP/FAMIS, the report describes the history and development of the program, criticizes several aspects of program policy and implementation, and recommends several significant changes and monitoring.

The report and DMAS's response are available on the JLARC web site at <http://jlarc.state.va.us>

Highlights include the following:

1. The program has been "hindered to some extent by inconsistent direction from the leadership at DMAS." (DMAS has had five different directors since 1997.)
2. FAMIS eliminated some obstacles which were in CMSIP, but created new design and operational issues, such as unexpected call volume and lack of staff training at the Central Processing Unit, lack of coordination with Medicaid and the Department of Social Services, and coverage terminations resulting from non-payment of premiums.
3. Enrollment stands at about 35,000 children, far less than the 63,000 enrollment target established in 1998. Yet 4,000 former CMSIP children were dropped from the program since August because of failure to complete the redetermination process. DMAS also plans to terminate 3,270 children on December 31 due to non-payment of FAMIS monthly premiums.
4. 40% of FAMIS families also have children enrolled in Medicaid, which requires them to deal with two totally different programs to obtain health care.
5. Virginia has already forfeited \$16 million in 1998 federal child health insurance dollars and is expected to forfeit another \$40 million in unspent 1999 federal funds. Virginia is ranked

40th out of 50 states for expenditures as a percent of the state's federal allotment.

The report recommends the following:

1. In order to guide policymakers, DMAS should develop a telephone and/or mail survey to track, on an ongoing basis, the reasons why children drop out of the FAMIS program.
2. The General Assembly could adopt a single Medicaid eligibility level of 133% of the poverty line for children of all ages. This would eliminate the confusion that results when a family has children in both programs. This could be funded with Title XXI funds to preserve the higher match rate.
3. DMAS should develop a detailed plan to improve ongoing communication and coordination between the Medicaid and FAMIS programs. The plan should include systems for referrals, tracking, and a clear delineation of responsibilities.
4. DMAS should carefully monitor the impact of counting stepparent income, monthly premiums, the six-month waiting period, changes in the benefit package, implementation of the Employer Sponsored Health Insurance Program, outreach, and implementation of managed care.

DMAS officials disagreed with several aspects of the report, but said they would "step up efforts" to boost FAMIS enrollment and determine "why others have dropped out of the program."



Other Current Grant-Funded Outreach Projects In VA

Bon Secours Care-A-Van – Chesterfield, Henrico, Hanover and Richmond City. CONTACT INFORMATION: Diane Poegl (804) 287-7616 or diane_poegl@bshsi.com

Peninsula Institute for Community Health (PICH) – Greater Peninsula. CONTACT INFORMATION: (757) 244-8560 Cynthia Newsome x311 or cnewsome@pich.org and Tina Williams x327 or twilliams@pich.org

RU FAMIS Outreach Project (Radford University) – Carroll, Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski, Wythe, Galax, and Radford. CONTACT INFORMATION: Rhonda Seltz (540) 831-7693 or rgseltz@radford.edu

Rural Health Outreach Program – Amherst, Augusta, Buckingham, Nelson and Prince Edward. CONTACT INFORMATION: Peggy Whitehead (434) 263-4858 or rhoppw@ceva.net

Stafford County Schools Head Start – Stafford. CONTACT INFORMATION: Jama Calabro (540) 658-6440 or schs@erols.com

Success By 6, United Way Services – Hanover, Henrico, Chesterfield and Richmond City. CONTACT INFORMATION: Shelley Turner (804) 771-5855 or turners@yourunitedway.org

PROJECT CONNECT Initiative Continued

by Kelly Nagy,
Project Connect
Coordinator,
Virginia Health Care
Foundation (VHCF)



The Virginia Health Care Foundation (VHCF) launched *Project Connect* in September 1999 to increase enrollment in state-sponsored insurance programs for children. VHCF awarded over \$1 million to 12 grantees to establish community-based outreach and enrollment assistance programs. During the 18 month grant period, these programs targeted 47 localities and enrolled over 5,500 uninsured children. As a result of this success, the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) awarded VHCF \$500,000 to continue utilizing the same community-based approach that made *Project Connect* such a success.

The second phase of *Project Connect* has already begun. VHCF invited some of the more successful original *Project Connect* grantees to apply for another year's funding.

In August, continued funding was awarded to five of the original *Project Connect* grantees:

United Way-Thomas Jefferson Area Success By 6 Insurance for Children Project – Albemarle, Charlottesville, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, and Orange
CONTACT NUMBER: (434) 972-1713
E-MAIL: jnafziger@unitedwaytja.org

Quin Rivers Agency for Community Action Children's Health Insurance Program – Caroline, Charles City, Fredericksburg, King and Queen, King George, King William, New Kent, Orange, Spotsylvania, Stafford, and Westmoreland
CONTACT NUMBER: (866) 226-9115
E-MAIL: qrchip@hotmail.com

Inova Partnership for Healthier Kids – Fairfax City, Fairfax, Loudoun and Alexandria
CONTACT NUMBER: (703) 321-1993

Johnson Health Center (Centra Health) – Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford City and County, Campbell, and Lynchburg
CONTACT NUMBER: (804) 947-5699
E-MAIL: joanne.greene@centrahealth.com

Community Memorial Health Center (Health Express) – Brunswick, Lunenburg, and Mecklenburg
CONTACT NUMBER: (804) 447-3151 x3122

In December, VHCF awarded an additional six grants for outreach and enrollment efforts beginning in January 2002. The new grantees will be assigned expert mentors from among the current grantees to help them get up to speed quickly. These new sites will be:

Alexandria Neighborhood Health Services, Inc. – Alexandria

Central Piedmont Health Services – Danville and the surrounding counties (through its three community health centers)

CHIP/Healthy Families of Chesapeake – Hampton Roads (in partnership with the South Norfolk Pediatric Center)

CHIP of Roanoke – Roanoke City (in partnership with the Carilion Pediatric Dental Program and the Kuumba Community Health and Wellness Center)

Cumberland Plateau Health District – Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, Tazewell (in partnership with the Clinch Valley Community Action Agency)

Stafford County Schools Head Start – Stafford County

If you have any questions regarding Project Connect, contact (804) 828-5804 or e-mail connect@vhcf.org.

Covering Kids & Families: An Update

by Kim Bemberis,
Project Assistant,
SignUpNow



The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has issued another round of funding for state children's health insurance projects called *Covering Kids & Families*. Virginia has the opportunity to apply for an up to \$1 million grant spread over four years. This money would be split with at least 50% divided between two-three local pilot projects and the rest of the dollars allocated for statewide efforts to enroll and retain children in the FAMIS and Medicaid programs. In addition to the \$1 million, the grantee needs to come up with a 50% match of cash by the third year of the grant (an additional \$500,000). There is also a requirement that the grant application, and the project when it is up and running, be supported by a broad based coalition of organizations that will help shape and govern Virginia's project.

Planning meetings took place in September and November to move Virginia's proposal along. At the September meeting, attendees decided to hire a consultant to facilitate a process to select the "Lead Agency" that would apply for the grant on behalf of the Commonwealth and to help to shape Virginia's proposal. Barbara Stanley, a consultant affiliated with the Southern Institute for Children and Families in South Carolina, led a one and a half day session where attendees discussed the requirements of the grant application and defined the criteria for the agency to be chosen as Lead Agent and for the programs to be chosen as local pilots. At the end of the session, the group selected the **Virginia Health Care Foundation (VHCF)** as Lead Agency for the grant.

Since that time, VHCF has had a planning meeting with a small workgroup refining the overall theme of the grant and the criteria for the pilot programs that would be selected. VHCF then issued a call for two-three page concept papers from a wide variety of organizations. On December 5, six out of the 20 agencies that submitted concept papers were selected to make presentations at the group meeting on December 11. Of those six projects, three were chosen as pilots. (Note: the third location, marked with an *, will go forward when additional funding is secured.)

The Covering Kids & Families pilots will be:

Consortium for Infant & Child Health (CINCH) – *providing school, child care and faith based outreach in Tidewater, especially Norfolk and Portsmouth.*

United Way-Thomas Jefferson Area Success By 6 Insurance for Children Project – *providing school, faith, and medical based outreach in Albemarle, Charlottesville, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, and Orange.*

RU FAMIS Outreach Project (Radford University)* – *providing school based outreach in Carroll, Montgomery, Giles, Pulaski, Wythe, Radford and Galax.*

These pilots will work with VHCF to fulfill the application requirements for the *Covering Kids & Families* grant and VHCF will submit Virginia's proposal to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation by February 1. If Virginia is awarded a grant, the initiative and its pilots will begin work in **July of 2002**.

State Resources

The Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) currently has four FAMIS Outreach Educators on staff assigned to five outreach regions in Virginia. They are supervised by the newly hired FAMIS Outreach Manager, Thomas Edicola (804) 225-4280. The function of the educators is to facilitate local outreach efforts by establishing relationships with local agencies and community based organizations to keep them informed of program changes, upcoming events, and to offer facilitation in connecting to area resources; assisting in providing outreach materials to community organizations for dissemination and display; serving as liaisons to educate community organizations on FAMIS; enhancing and building public/private partnerships; and mobilizing community representatives. Get to know your area's educator today!

| | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Central Region | Sam Healy | e-mail: shealy@dmas.state.va.us | phone: (804) 786-7355 |
| Eastern Region | Jacquelyn Brown | e-mail: jbrown@dmas.state.va.us | phone: (804) 786-4384 |
| Northern Region | Christine Snively | e-mail: csnively@dmas.state.va.us | phone: (804) 225-4078 |
| Piedmont & Western Regions | Andy Feagans | e-mail: afeagans@dmas.state.va.us | phone: (804) 786-2310 |

For additional information go to <http://www.famis.org/English/Reports/OutreachEducator.doc>

SignUpNow

PO Box 31394
Richmond, VA 23294-1394
804/965-1352 804/965-0475 FAX
signupnow@vhha.com
www.signupnowva.org

2001 SignUpNow Summary of Activities

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------|
| Number of Workshops Conducted: | 41 |
| Number of Individuals Trained: | 1,984 |
| Number of Tool Kits Distributed: | 2,100 |
| Number of Miles Traveled: | 15,593 |



<http://www.signupnowva.org>

SignUpNow is launching a new web site. The new address is www.signupnowva.org and construction will be finalized by the end of January. While the site is being developed, visitors can still access current enrollment numbers (the latest numbers available by locality are from November 2001).

When the site goes “live” in its full capacity, visitors will be able to find all sorts of useful information. Items to be included are:

- The **complete** contents of the **SignUpNow Tool Kit** for ease of updating existing copies and so that anyone who wants a copy can download the information.
- Historical and current copies of SignUpNow publications will be available in PDF format.
- Information regarding the Virginia Coalition for Children’s Health and legislation regarding children’s health insurance issues before the 2002 General Assembly.
- Monthly enrollment numbers by locality in table and map form.
- Links to other web sites with information on best practices in health insurance outreach.
- And much, much more!



Mailing List Housekeeping

Has your e-mail address changed recently? If it has, please inform us. More and more information (including some recent funding opportunities) is being related by e-mail due to speed of delivery and low cost. We’d hate for you to miss out due to the lack of a current e-mail address. Also, if you receive copies of this newsletter for people who no longer work at your office, please contact SignUpNow. Call (804) 965-1352 or e-mail signupnow@vhha.com.

