

SignUpNow



Outreach

Communities Connecting Kids With Health Coverage

Changes Coming to FAMIS and Medicaid for Children



By Linda Nablo,
Project Director,
SignUpNow

Six months into the administration of Governor Mark Warner, promised changes to Virginia's health insurance programs for lower income children appear to be on their way. The Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS), under the guidance of Director Patrick Finnerty, is working to put the finishing touches on several significant policy and operational changes to both the Family Access to Medical Insurance Security (FAMIS) and Medicaid insurance programs. The modifications, designed to increase enrollment in the health coverage programs, are intended for a September implementation. These changes have been developed by DMAS based on documented problems with the current systems, actions of the 2002 Virginia General Assembly, the continuing concerns of a vocal advocate community, and comments received from over 200 individuals attending one of five FAMIS Town Hall meetings conducted around the Commonwealth by DMAS in April.

Policy changes and new procedures are currently being finalized, and the following represent some of the most significant changes already implemented or anticipated:

Elimination of Monthly Premiums
Based on documentation that many families could not maintain payment of the required monthly premiums for FAMIS; that Virginia's program required a higher financial participation by families than most other states, and; that administering the premium system cost more than was being collected each month; DMAS stopped the

collection of all monthly premiums for FAMIS in April. Families with a child in FAMIS are still required to make copayments for medical services.

Coordination of Medicaid and FAMIS In response to concerns that the separate administration of the Medicaid and FAMIS programs required many families to have to "figure out" where they fit and navigate a complicated system or fall between the cracks, several changes designed to make these systems more "seamless" will be implemented in September. These include:

- Development of a single "child health insurance" form that will serve as an **application for either program**
- Eliminating some of the required verifications in Medicaid to make the necessary **verification requirements more uniform** for both programs, and
- Instituting a **"No Wrong Door"** policy that will allow children to be enrolled in either program through the FAMIS Central Processing Unit (CPU) or through their local Department of Social Services.

One Family/One Program

In keeping with direction provided by the General Assembly in the recently adopted state budget, all children, regardless of age, with family incomes at or below 133% of the Federal Poverty Level will be financially eligible for the Medicaid program as of September. This will eliminate the difficulties faced by thousands of



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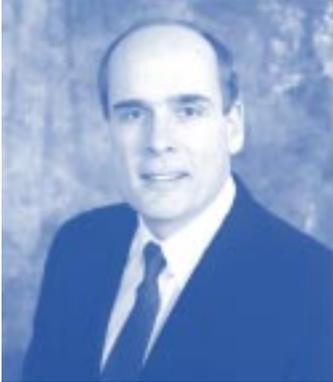
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Letter from DMAS to Community Partners



By **Pat Finnerty**,
Director,
Department of Medical
Assistance Services

“Our entire message needs to be clear that when it comes to the health of children in Virginia, there is no wrong door, and no matter what door they come to, we will see that they are directed to the services they need.”



July 2002

Dear Community Partners,

As you are aware, Governor Warner has made child health insurance enrollment a top priority of his administration. Through the administration's commitment, the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) staff now have a clear direction for moving forward with changes to the FAMIS program that will improve the enrollment of uninsured children in either the Medicaid or FAMIS programs. In addition, the 2002 General Assembly, through the Appropriation Act and legislation, supported a variety of improvements to the FAMIS program. These important changes are described throughout this newsletter.

First of all, I want to thank you for your tireless dedication to improving children's health insurance programs in Virginia. DMAS could not move forward with the improvements to the FAMIS program without your input and support. DMAS continues to provide financial support during the next fiscal year to the Virginia Health Care Foundation's Project Connect grants and to SignUpNow. We also welcome back our partners, the local departments of social services, who will help us ensure that families no longer fall through the cracks and that there is enrollment assistance in every locality of the Commonwealth.

As we get closer to the September 1, 2002 implementation date of the changes to FAMIS, the key is going to be open communication between all the parties. During the upcoming August training sessions, there will be discussions on effective communication mechanisms between local outreach workers, local departments of social services, and the FAMIS Central Processing Unit. Our success will be measured by the number of children we enroll and keep in Virginia's child health insurance programs.

DMAS staff, along with the Outreach Oversight Committee, will be developing a strategic plan for conducting outreach activities at the State and local level. Our goal will be to develop a plan that complements the community outreach groups, rather than duplicate those efforts. Our entire message needs to be clear that when it comes to the health of children in Virginia, there is no wrong door, and no matter what door they come to, we will see that they are directed to the services they need. In the coming months, DMAS' outreach team will be developing new and exciting partnership opportunities. I encourage you to collaborate with them to promote a comprehensive and unified outreach strategy. DMAS has recently retained Ogilvy, an industry leader in public relations, to increase the awareness of children's health insurance programs in Virginia.

The September changes are only the beginning. My staff and I look forward to working with you in identifying additional changes that are needed. Again, thank you for your efforts on behalf of the children of Virginia.



Back-to-School 2002

By **Linda Nablo**,
Project Director,
SignUpNow



In just a few days, over a million of Virginia's children will be headed back to school. But this year, it is also a time when many parents may learn that their children could qualify for the Commonwealth's health insurance programs. To capture the attention of potentially eligible families, the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services and some local outreach projects are planning to use this back-to-school time to reach out to parents.

Title I Schools

Over 340,000 students in the 748 Title I schools across Virginia will find a special flyer included in the packet of materials and forms sent home to parents the first week of school. The flyer will provide basic information about children's health insurance in Virginia and encourage families to call the FAMIS Central Processing Unit.

Free and Reduced-Price Meal Program

In addition, in a targeted effort to reach the children who qualify for the free and reduced-price meal program, another flyer is being included in all approval letters sent to a child's home. When parents learn that their child has been enrolled in the school meal program they will also learn that they may well qualify for FAMIS or Medicaid insurance. In some communities, local outreach programs are also including a notice offering to help families through the application process.

Local Efforts

Local outreach projects are also

planning additional strategies to use this special time to reach out to parents. In some school districts, back-to-school emergency cards or health forms have been modified to ask parents directly if their child has health insurance and if not, if they would like to be contacted to learn more. Project staff, school nurses or volunteers will follow up with interested families in the proceeding months. Other localities are conducting outreach events during school open houses and back-to-school fairs.

National Efforts

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, through their *Covering Kids* initiative, kicked off a national back-to-school awareness campaign with a press conference on August 1st. The campaign, designed to encourage parents to "put enrolling their uninsured children in health care coverage on the top of their back-to-school checklists," provides localities with resources and materials to help maximize FAMIS and Medicaid outreach efforts.

Information on using *Covering Kids* materials, planning a back-to-school event, working with the media, building corporate and organizational partnerships, and evaluating the results of your outreach and enrollment activities is available at

www.coveringkids.org/communications.

FAMIS Central Processing Unit (CPU)

Plans are underway at the FAMIS CPU to prepare for the increased volume of calls resulting from these efforts.

Outreach Materials Available from the State

Free promotional materials for Virginia's health insurance programs for children will soon be available from the state. Orders are placed through Commonwealth/Martin and you may call or fax in your order.

Items currently available are: **the new *Application for Children's Health Insurance*** (a joint application that is used for applying for FAMIS or Medicaid and as of September 1st can be sent either to the FAMIS CPU or the local department of social services for processing) and the **updated FAMIS brochure** (English). Additional items will be added later on in the Fall.

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 items in multiples of 100.

Call your order in to (804) 780-0076



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

Results of the FAMIS Town Hall Meetings

The Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) conducted five Town Hall Meetings on the FAMIS program around the Commonwealth during the month of April. The purpose of these meetings was to hear from families and communities on ways to improve Virginia's health insurance program for low-income children.

Approximately 200 individuals attended one of the five meetings that were held in Abingdon, Newport News, Lynchburg, Fairfax, and Richmond. Among those in attendance at the meetings to listen were several legislators, members of the DMAS Board and Staff, and representatives from the Managed Care Entities providing FAMIS and Medicaid.

The people who gave testimony ranged from community based program outreach workers and representatives of local Departments

of Social Services to parents who had applied for the FAMIS program. The vast majority of speakers addressed problems with the FAMIS CPU, the application process, benefits, and managed care network issues.

Key findings of the meetings, according to DMAS, include the need to:

- Have better coordination between the Medicaid and FAMIS programs.
- Streamline the application and renewal process for Medicaid and FAMIS.
- Eliminate or lower monthly premium payments in FAMIS.
- Improve communication between the FAMIS CPU staff and families.
- Develop an outreach program that promotes both Medicaid and FAMIS.
- Adopt 12 month continuous eligibility for both programs.
- Eliminate the 6 month waiting period for insurance in FAMIS.
- Increase access to dental care.

Changes...

Continued from front page

families who had a younger child eligible for Medicaid while their older children were eligible for FAMIS.

Exceptions to the Waiting Period

Also as a result of the recent General Assembly session, a new "good cause" exception will be added to the requirement that a child be uninsured for six-months before being enrolled in FAMIS. The new exception will allow a parent to drop private health insurance for their child, if the monthly premium costs more than 10% of the family's income, and immediately apply for FAMIS. The policy also states that families may drop COBRA coverage without being subject to the six month waiting period.

Relatives May Apply for Children in Their Care

As of September, it will also be easier for a blood or marital relative caring for a child to apply for FAMIS or Medicaid for that child. These "adult relative caretakers" will be able to submit an application for the child without documentation of legal custody/guardianship or authorization from the child's parent.

New Media Push

To increase the public awareness, DMAS will be promoting a new public relations campaign for *Children's Health Insurance in Virginia*. New brochures, posters, and media advertisements will promote both the Medicaid and FAMIS programs for children. These new outreach materials are expected to be available later in the Fall.

Additional Changes

Other changes to Virginia's health coverage programs for children are likely to follow in the coming year or as a result of the 2003 legislative session. For updated information on these programs, continue to visit the SignUpNow web site at www.signupnowva.org or call (804) 965-1352.

Virginia's Total FAMIS Enrollment as of July 1, 2002 is 42,293 or 52%.

Congratulations! The following localities have reached over 100% enrollment in FAMIS - the counties of Prince William (106%) and Arlington (113%) and the cities of Alexandria (108%), Williamsburg (121%), Manassas (143%), Falls Church (208%) and Fairfax (368%).*

14 localities are between 70% and 100% and an additional 49 localities are between 50% and 70%!*

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

**It is important to note that the estimates of uninsured eligible children that these enrollment percentages are based on are undergoing recalculation at this time. Once these calculations are complete new estimates of both Medicaid and FAMIS eligible children will be published resulting in new enrollment percentages for localities. In the future, enrollment percentages for Medicaid will also be available.*

Did you know?

If you fax in applications and verification items to the FAMIS CPU that you are not faxing to a regular fax machine, but rather to a fax server that receives hundreds of faxes a day? Because of this, if there is a problem with any fax you send, you need to **refax the entire document**, not just the page(s) that did not go through. It is very difficult for the CPU to match up resent pages with prior faxed pages.

A \$0.37 stamp may not cover the mailing of a children's health insurance application and all the accompanying verification documents. If a piece of mail sent to the CPU or local department of social services is lacking correct postage, it will be delayed days or even weeks in reaching its destination.

That as of July 1st there is a change in how local Departments of Social Services handle the requirement to cooperate with Child Support Enforcement when a parent applies for Medicaid for a child? From now on, **the issue of cooperating with the Division of Child Support Enforcement will be addressed after the child is enrolled in Medicaid** – not during the application process. Also, if the custodial parent declines to cooperate with DCSE or fails to return the forms at all, the case will no longer be forwarded to DCSE for further action.

During the month of August **CVS/pharmacy stores in Virginia** will alert parents about available health coverage programs through its prescription refill information forms for children up to age 18. Included will be a health care coverage message and a toll-free number to contact for more information. 

SignUpNow Web Site Update

The new SignUpNow web site, www.signupnowva.org, went live at the end of January. Between February and the end of July, 6,269 sessions* have been conducted (an average of 1,044 per month) on the SignUpNow site. The majority of sessions were conducted by Virginia users, but 17 additional states and 9 countries have also visited.

The most frequently visited pages of the site are the *Tool Kit*, News & Publications, Training Calendar, and Program Information (specifically the FAMIS enrollment by locality information).

(*A "session" is defined as a user entering the site as opposed to a "hit" which happens any time a user clicks on an object on the site.)

Congratulations!

The Quin Rivers Agency for Community Action Children's Health Insurance Program and the United Way-Thomas Jefferson Area Success By 6 Insurance for Children Project received **Project Connect Superhero Awards** at the 2002 Virginia Health Care Foundation Heroes in Health Care Luncheon on May 30th for their extraordinary efforts to enroll children in their service areas in Virginia's health insurance programs. Enrolling children has become both the professional and personal mission of the staff working on these projects and each initiative has demonstrated exceptional diligence and success.

Also, Linda Nablo, Project Director of SignUpNow was awarded the **Child Advocate of the Year Award for 2002** on July 27th from the Virginia Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics for her "dedicated service to Virginia's Children."

Covering Kids & Families Grant Awarded to Virginia

Virginia has been awarded \$900,000 from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to help with efforts to enroll children in Virginia's health insurance programs for children. The award, the maximum amount available to Virginia, is augmented by \$450,000 in matching funds that must be raised by the third year of the four year project. Half of this money will be used to fund two pilot sites with a third pilot* joining in year two of the grant. The other half will be used to fund statewide outreach trainings, publications, and coordination of efforts.

The Virginia Health Care Foundation (VHCF) is the lead agency and SignUpNow is a partner in the statewide outreach portion of the efforts.

The *Covering Kids & Families* local pilot projects will be:

Consortium for Infant & Child Health (CINCH) – *providing school, child care and faith based outreach in Norfolk and Portsmouth and the Peninsula.* CONTACT INFORMATION: Andy Chunn (757) 668-6447 or ChunnBA@chkd.com.

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.* CONTACT INFORMATION: Jon Nafziger (434) 972-1713 or jnafziger@unitedwaytja.org.

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

The 36 member *Covering Kids & Families* Coalition is the governing body of the grant, with each local pilot program also having a supporting local coalition. The statewide and local efforts will strive toward the three goals set forth in the grant – outreach, simplification and coordination. In September, the Coalition will meet to formalize their workplan.



Welcome

Kim McGaughey is joining the staff of the Virginia Health Care Foundation (VHCF) to provide leadership on all child health activities of the Foundation. In her capacity as Senior Program Officer for Child Health Programs, she will manage both the Robert Wood Johnson *Covering Kids & Families* grant and the *Project Connect* initiative and work with other organizations and policy makers to improve Virginia's programs. We look forward to collaborating with her in the future.

Project Connect Continues

Launched in September 1999 to increase enrollment in state-sponsored insurance programs for children, *Project Connect* [an initiative of the Virginia Health Care Foundation (VHCF)] has resulted in 8,300 children receiving health insurance coverage through FAMIS or Medicaid through June 2002.

Following VHCF's initial 18 month and \$1 million investment, the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) awarded \$500,000 to VHCF continue utilizing the same community-based approach that made *Project Connect* such a success. Recently, DMAS provided an additional \$500,000 to fund *Project Connect* grants through June of 2003.

Continued *Project Connect* funding has been awarded to four of the original grantees to continue their good work through July 2003:

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

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

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

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

SignUpNow is a project of the Virginia Coalition for Children's Health

Also continuing through December are the six *Project Connect* projects that began in January of 2002:

Alexandria Neighborhood Health Services, Inc. – Alexandria
CONTACT NUMBER: (703) 519-1725

Central Piedmont Health Services – Danville and the surrounding counties (through its 3 community health centers)
CONTACT NUMBER: (434) 792-7381x26
E-MAIL: bwhite@cphealth.org

CHIP/Healthy Families of Chesapeake – Hampton Roads (in partnership with the South Norfolk Pediatric Center)
CONTACT NUMBER: (757)543-9100

CHIP of Roanoke – Roanoke City (in partnership with the Carilion Pediatric Dental Program and the Kuumba Community Health and Wellness Center)
CONTACT NUMBER: (540) 857-6993 x130
E-MAIL: cyndywilliams@netscape.net

Cumberland Plateau Health District – Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, Tazewell (in partnership with the Clinch Valley Community Action Agency)
CONTACT NUMBERS: Buchanan (276) 935-4591; Dickenson (276) 926-4979; Russell (276) 889-7621; Tazewell (276) 988-5583.

Stafford County Schools Head Start – Stafford County
CONTACT NUMBER: (540) 368-2559

Responses to a special call for proposals for a new *Project Connect* grantee serving the city of Richmond are currently being reviewed by VHCF. A decision is expected any day.

In the Fall there will be a Call for Proposals for some new *Project Connect* projects that will begin in January 2003. If you are interested in receiving information on the new round of *Project Connect* grants contact (804) 828-5804 or e-mail connect@vhcf.org.



SignUpNow

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Information on
Important Changes
to Medicaid and
FAMIS Inside!

Mailing List Maintenance



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.

SignUpNow Tool Kit Updates

Virginia's children's health insurance programs are programs that are undergoing change. Since DMAS has announced a package of changes that go into affect on September 1st, SignUpNow is in the process of completely revising its *Tool Kit* yet again.

This complete rewrite of the *Tool Kit* will be distributed at SignUpNow trainings being scheduled for the Fall and it will also be posted on the SignUpNow web site in late August/early September.

Upcoming SignUpNow Workshops



To quickly inform community workers who are helping families apply for Medicaid or FAMIS about the program changes coming September 1st, the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) and the Virginia Department of Health are sponsoring a **telecast training event on August 21st**. The one and a half hour broadcast, beginning promptly at 10AM, will be telecast to nine local Health Departments around Virginia. SignUpNow will provide the training and DMAS staff will be available to answer questions. This telecast is specifically designed to get the new information into the hands of local workers who are **already familiar with FAMIS and Medicaid** and only need to learn about changes so they can continue to guide families appropriately. To learn the locations and how to register through DMAS for the August 21st telecast, visit the www.famis.org/English/training.html or www.signupnowva.org/calendar.asp.

Other workshops will be offered in the coming months for those who need to learn (or review) information about children's health insurance in Virginia including the latest changes. SignUpNow is currently scheduling FAMIS/Medicaid workshops in many localities across the Commonwealth. In the coming weeks, continue to visit the web site at www.signupnowva.org/calendar.asp to check on dates and locations as they are finalized.

Anticipated workshops locations include:

Fairfax, Fredericksburg, Galax, Lynchburg, Norfolk, Petersburg, Portsmouth, Richmond, and Williamsburg. Additional sites will be added soon.