

## Back-to-School Campaign showed statewide reach

*Participants included governor, school partners*

The Covering Kids and Families Statewide Coalition congratulates and extends its thanks to Pennsylvanians who participated in large and small ways in the 2002 Back-to-School Campaign. Events ranged from news conferences to health fairs, from work with school districts and libraries to World Breastfeeding Day gatherings.

Statewide coalition members, Reaching Out grantees, and elected officials embraced the theme of the Back-to-School Campaign – putting health coverage at the top of the back-to-school list – and carried it through their activities.

### Covering Kids and Families Statewide Coalition members

Consumer Health Coalition and Cornerstone Care, who share the Pittsburgh media market, co-hosted a Back-to-School Campaign kickoff with the Caring Foundation of Western Pennsylvania, sharing the message with local business leaders, media, families, and local government officials. They also developed a back-to-school checklist, handed out to parents in a variety of outreach settings.

The Maternal and Child Health Consortium of Chester County used the back-to-school message and materials at every outreach event and effort in August.

Aetna/USHealthcare mailed sample applications, brochures, and fliers to schools statewide. The Pennsylvania PTA printed a how-to on conducting children's coverage outreach in its statewide newsletter. The Pennsylvania Association of Family Physicians published an article about connecting kids to health coverage in the September/October edition of *Keystone Physician* magazine.

Members of the Children's Health Insurance Coalition in Southeastern Pennsylvania delivered the outreach message through the Free Library of Philadelphia, Temple Health Connection, Beloved of St. John Community Development Center, 250 schools in the School District of Philadelphia, the Maternity Care Coalition's MOMobile in 10 sites, Child Care Information Services throughout North and Northeast Philadelphia, the Masons of Pennsylvania's Children's Festival, Unity Day on the Ben Franklin Parkway, Norris Square Civic Association, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health's events in South Philadelphia, KIDFEST at the Philadelphia Zoo, Wadsworth Day, MEGAFEST on Latino Unity Day, Fishtown Community Day, and many other health fairs, block parties and community events.

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## Back-to-School: Statewide participants

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### Reaching Out Grantees

The Tioga County Partnership distributed 10,000 placemats throughout the county, rented billboards for three months, sent information home with every school student, staffed a booth at the Tioga County Fair, and attended 12 open houses at area schools. The Centre County Partnership for Community Health attached fliers to each school lunch application and provided enrollment assistance at school orientations. Lock Haven Hospital sent letters home to area school children and hosted an open house on health coverage. The Stroudsburg Area School District shared information through its parent newsletter, kindergarten registration sessions, and distributed CHIP information to families who did not list an insurance carrier on their emergency information cards.

### Elected officials

Governor Mark Schweiker held a news conference with officials from the Public Welfare and Insurance departments, plus Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children President and CEO Joan L. Benso, touting the back-to-school message in what Governor Schweiker called "a commercial for CHIP." State Senator Shirley Kitchen (D-Philadelphia) provided information to her constituents at a health fair at the Children's Medical Center. State Representative Gayle Wright (D-Erie) sent a letter and a CHIP brochure to every elementary school student in her district and held a "CHIP Day" in her district office to provide information and assist families in applying. State Representative Tina Pickett (R-Bradford) attended a news conference at the Bradford County Assistance office with Guthrie Healthcare System's Community Health Improvement Initiative.

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## School lunch application project in second year

### *Schools added in southeastern and western Pennsylvania*

This fall, eight Pennsylvania school districts began a second phase in testing the school lunch program as a vehicle for increasing health coverage for kids. This year's project includes a revised form, training for school district and County Assistance office staff, and a more formal evaluation. The project also added five new school districts and four new county assistance offices. Two of the new school districts, West Chester in Chester County and William Penn in Delaware County, are in southeastern Pennsylvania, and three are in western Pennsylvania: Sto-Rox in Allegheny County, Canon-McMillan in Washington County, and Greater Latrobe in Westmoreland County.

At the end of last year's effort, the Harrisburg marketing firm PPO&S conducted a series of key informant interviews with school staff, County Assistance office directors, and CHIP contractors. Feedback from school districts indicated that the four-page non-carbon duplicating form was problematic. Each form had to be separated and re-col-

lated, pages were missing or illegible, families may have filled in every blank even though they may not have wanted to apply for health coverage, and a significant number of families did not apply for school lunch using this form and had to be contacted later. The disruption of the application process was a critical factor for school districts that had to make multiple efforts to reach all children eligible for a free or reduced-price school meal. School lunch numbers are used to allocate Title I and other education funding.

### Lessons learned, revisions made

Feedback from the CAO staff and the CHIP contractors indicated that since many applications came in for one child at a time, it was difficult to define families without a parent's Social Security number, something not asked for on the form. In most cases, income documentation was missing. In some cases, families were already enrolled in Medicaid.

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## School lunch applications

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Based on these results and a review of school lunch rules and procedures, the group designing the project – the state departments of Education, Insurance and Public Welfare, the Consumer Health Coalition, and Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children – revised the form and adjusted the processing procedures. This year's project uses the traditional short form for free and reduced-price school meals, a second form for health coverage, and an envelope for returning the health coverage form and income verification. The Pennsylvania Department of Education's Food and Nutrition service distributed the forms through e-mail, allowing school districts to customize and print their forms. The Neiman Group, a marketing firm under contract to the departments of Insurance and Public Welfare, distributed the envelopes to each participating school district.

In August, training sessions for school districts were held in Pittsburgh and West Chester. The sessions addressed distribution of the forms and envelopes, processing procedures, and avenues for

communication.

Currently, six of the eight school districts have distributed their forms and envelopes: West Chester, William Penn, Canon-McMillan, Wilkinsburg, Greater Latrobe, and Duquesne. Pittsburgh and Sto-Rox have sent out their school lunch forms and will send out health coverage forms later.

While it is too early to measure results, some school districts have provided preliminary information: Canon-McMillan has sent more than 100 applications to its county assistance office, and West Chester has processed 78 applications. The other districts report a small but steady stream of returns.

The Insurance Department is designing an evaluation of the project that will include contact with school personnel, county assistance workers, families, and the CHIP contractors.

For more information, contact Ann Bacharach, Covering Kids and Families Project Director, 717-236-5680, ext. 114, [annbach@papartnerships.org](mailto:annbach@papartnerships.org).

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## Self-declaration test heading toward final report

The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare continues its examination of self-declaration of income, testing its accuracy through in-depth cross-checking of applications and preparing to release a final evaluation in the future.

DPW launched the School-based Health Care Coverage Enrollment Demonstration Project in January 2001. Funded by an \$80,000 federal grant, the one-year demonstration targeted school clusters in the Philadelphia School District, testing innovative strategies to increase enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP. The three strategies tested were post-authorization income verification, intensifying outreach efforts, and a combination of the two.

Public and private agencies collaborated on the demonstration, including DPW and its Philadelphia County Assistance Office (PCAO), the Pennsylvania Department of Insurance, the Delaware Valley Healthcare Council, the Philadelphia Citizens for

Children and Youth, Philadelphia School District, and Philadelphia hospitals.

Normally, DPW requires families to provide verification of their income before they are enrolled in Medicaid. Under this pilot, the PCAO accepted applications from households participating in the pilot and determined income eligibility based solely on income self-declared. After enrollment, DPW's Bureau of Program Evaluation reviewed the approved application by making a written request to heads of households, conducting third-party verification requests and checking applications against the Income Eligibility Verification System (IEVS).

IEVS is an automated system with on-line links to the state Department of Labor and Industry wage files, Unemployment Compensation benefits and Social Security benefit files. However, its use as an income confirmation tool may be hampered by the passage of time between the time families

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## Self-declaration test

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apply – the income they self-declare – and actual income by the time checks are conducted. To further test the reliability of IEVS as an income confirmation tool, DPW completed a more exhaustive review on 283 randomly chosen applications.

Of those, DPW sent requests for income verification to 164 households, leaving out households reporting zero income or applicants who submitted verification. Responses were received from 66 households (40 percent), of which seven were incomplete, and no response was received from 98 households (60 percent).

Review findings fell into three categories. In the first group, reported income was verified as accurate or the review could not find additional income sources in 128 cases (45 percent).

In the second group of 114 cases (40 percent), verified income differed from the income self-declared. Reported to PCAO for follow-up action, findings included:

- 42 cases with new or additional sources of income.
- 36 had underreported their income.

- 12 had a combination of a new source and underreporting of income.
- 20 had review-related information findings.
- Four had reported zero income, but income was found on IEVS.

PCAO follow-up resulted in:

- No change in case status in 59 cases (52 percent), with 120 children remaining eligible.
- A change in case status in 55 cases (48 percent), including 108 ineligible children and 10 children remaining eligible.
- CHIP referral for 24 ineligible cases.

The third group of 41 cases failed to cooperate, or DPW could not determine the accuracy of the household's declared income.

The Bureau of Program Evaluation further reviewed approved applications with an IEVS match to analyze accuracy and consistency of self-declared income with income reported on IEVS.

The review found:

- 176 cases out of 283 cases were found on IEVS.
- Of the 176 cases with an IEVS match, 102 (58 percent) had variances in income potentially affecting Medicaid eligibility.
- 102 cases with variances resulted in ineligibility findings for 106 children, while 111 remained eligible.
- Ironically, cases with an IEVS match had a significantly higher percentage of income variance (58 percent) than those with no IEVS match (11.2 percent).

Findings will be included as a part of the overall project evaluation.

### Bucks Co. YW enrolls 1,000th child

The Bucks County YWCA in Doylestown, building on Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth's Enrollment Fund, has enrolled 1,000 children into health coverage since 1999. With additional funds, the Y hired a full-time outreach worker to assist families through the enrollment process and track them, design forms for documenting income, and reach out to families who thought they weren't eligible for coverage. For more information, contact Barbara Torregrossa at PCCY, 215-563-5848; btorregrossa@pccy.org.



## Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

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20 North Market Square, Suite 300  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
717-236-5680 or 1-800-257-2030  
[www.papartnerships.org](http://www.papartnerships.org)