

Enrollment days: Improvements on an old idea

Several Covering Kids and Families pilot sites have transformed enrollment days, once considered unsuccessful because they lacked the privacy families needed, into effective outreach tools by building on established partnerships with trusted community sources and helping families assemble documents and navigate forms.

Originally, Covering Kids participants thought that health fair-like enrollment events would draw people who would readily and easily apply for publicly funded

health programs. But despite their offers of freebies and entertainment for children, these events were sparsely attended. Families were uncomfortable about sharing private information in a public space, and those that did attend rarely had the necessary documents and information.

However, concentrating staff in one place and offering one-stop shopping for families remained an appealing idea. In the almost five years since Covering Kids began, several of the local projects have created successful variations on enrollment events.

Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth worked with the Philadelphia City Health Centers in summer 2002 to increase health coverage and health center usage. In addition to helping staff understand health coverage programs and their benefits for health centers, PCCY scheduled events at the centers to raise awareness of available coverage, screen for eligibility, and refer families to on-site benefits counselors for appointments. The events included clowns, children's entertainment, giveaways, and raffles. Through these events, more than 200 families were screened and referred to the counselors.

Wellspan Health has used its established referral networks to develop enrollment days and address some of the transportation issues faced by target families. Wellspan collaborates with schools, family centers, community-based organizations, and faith sites to choose community sites and select a

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Take the Money

Another variation on an enrollment event is the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Take the Money campaign. Built around drawing people at tax time, these events help families complete their tax returns and file for Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). They also help families apply for other public benefits, ranging from LIHEAP to health coverage, at the same time.

With income and family size information already assembled, families can be screened for eligibility for programs such as Food Stamps, Medicaid and CHIP, cash and housing assistance, and state income tax rebates.

For more information, contact Cathy Fisher at PCCY, 215-563-5848; the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, www.cbpp.org or 202-408-1080; or Kim Bell at DC Action for Children, kbell@dckids.org.

Enrollment day formats evolve

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trusted partner, such as a school nurse, church member, or community leader, to inform families about available coverage and application assistance. Families schedule appointments for the day of the event, are told what documents and information to bring, and get a reminder phone call a day or two in advance. The community site provides a space with some privacy, a copier, and phone access. Wellspan sends all three of its Community Health Workers to the site to maximize the number of families who can be assisted.

Cornerstone Care has done similar events in its three counties, partnering with local schools and community-based organizations. They have often used community events such as health fairs, county fairs, and firefighters' parades to publicize enrollment events. They also provide appointments for families and information on what to bring.

A stand-alone enrollment day remains a less-than-optimal strategy, but by leveraging long-term experience and community relationships, enrollment days can become an effective tactic. Elements vital to success include:

- A referral source with community trust.

- An accessible community site with enough traffic to avoid the stigma of arriving only to apply for coverage.
- Knowledgeable staff.
- Advance notice to families.
- Appointments for enrollment assistance
- Information on needed documents and information.
- Reminders just before the event.
- A copier.
- Phone access.

Helpful additions:

- Entertainment for children who are accompanying a parent.
- Incentives to families, such as small giveaways or gift certificates.
- A needed service such as a sports physical or immunization for school.
- A computer, access to the Internet to apply online, and a printer.

For more information, contact Ann Bacharach, 717-236-5680, ext. 111; annbach@papartnerships.org.

Seminars offered info on state insurance programs

Health care professionals, insurance officials, and human services workers learned the ins and outs of state health coverage programs at regional seminars conducted by the Institute for Healthy Communities and the Delaware Valley Healthcare Council of HAP.

The seminars, conducted in Erie, Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, and Scranton, were sponsored by the Covering Kids and Families, Part 2 Adult Coverage program, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The program included information on:

- Free and low-cost health insurance.
- Insurance for adults with special health care needs.
- Coverage for displaced workers.

- COMPASS Power User and Community Partners.
- Regional best practices.

Speakers from the Pennsylvania departments of Insurance, Health, and Public Welfare shared information on state programs that provide access to health care for adults and families. The meetings also included presentations on local outreach and enrollment efforts. More than 200 people attended the seminars, many from hospitals and health systems, payers, county assistance offices, local non-profits, and community partnerships. Plans are underway to repeat similar sessions next year and expand to northcentral Pennsylvania.

Suggestions for topics for next year's meetings

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Workshops: Update on state programs for the uninsured

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are welcome. Contact Joan Apt at japt@dvhc.org for more information.

The seminars were made possible by a collaboration between non-profits and state departments. The Planning Committee included Joan Apt, Director of Community Health, Delaware Valley Healthcare Council of HAP; Trish Liddick,

Data and Program Coordinator, The Institute for Healthy Communities; George L. Hoover, Evelynn Showell, and Christine Spade, Department of Public Welfare; Pat Stromberg, Jeannette Hoffman, and Robin Stanley, Pennsylvania Insurance Department; Ed Spahr, Pennsylvania Department of Health; and Ann Bacharach, Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children.

News and resources

- Analysis of Children's Health Insurance Program in Rural Pennsylvania is now available through the Center for Rural Pennsylvania's Web site: www.ruralpa.org/chip_report.pdf.
- The Pennsylvania Health Law Project now has a screening tool for public benefits on its Web site, www.phlp.org.
- A white paper on the pilot tests of the combined school lunch and health coverage effort will be available on PPC's web site, www.papartnerships.org in January.
- Cover the Uninsured Week will be May 10-16, 2004. Noah Wyle, ER's John Carter, will be the national spokesperson. For more information,

visit www.covertheuninsuredweek.org.

- The Back to School Campaign will again begin in August 2004. It's never too early to begin planning. For more information, visit www.coveringkidsandfamilies.org.
- Information on Earned Income Tax Credits and a 2003 EITC Kit are available at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities web site, www.cbpp.org.

Renewal idea

Give a copy of the original application to families and tell them to save it. When the time comes to renew, much of the information can be easily copied to the renewal form, solving many problems.

Do you have a simple but effective and low-tech idea that has worked for you in assisting families? Let us know and we'll post it in our next newsletter. The more ideas, the better!

Covering Kids and Families Coalition Meeting dates, 2004

All meetings will be at the Harrisburg Hilton, One North Second Street, Harrisburg.

- Wednesday, March 17, 2004
- Wednesday, June 2, 2004
- Wednesday, September 8, 2004
- Wednesday, December 1, 2004

For more information, contact Covering Kids and Families Project Director Ann Bacharach, 717-236-5680, ext 111; annbach@papartnerships.org.



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