

Process Improvement Collaborative

Encouraging test prompts phone enrollment process

Callers looking for answers on children's health coverage from the state Helpline can now apply while they're on the phone. In part, this is an outcome of a group of state officials and advocates engaging in the Covering Kids and Families Process Improvement Collaborative, which pilot tested over the phone enrollment earlier this year. The pilot found that even families just calling for information are likely to accept the offer to apply and will have the necessary information at hand.

The original Collaborative team included representatives from the Office of Income Maintenance in the Department of Public Welfare along with the York County Assistance Office, CHIP in the Department of Insurance, Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, and the state's former Helpline contractor, the Center for Schools and Communities.

Under the test of over the phone enrollments, conducted from December 2003 to November 2004, some parents and caregivers calling the Helpline were offered the opportunity to complete an application during the call rather than waiting for a mailed paper application. The Helpline counselors had access to the Power User Version of COMPASS, a text-only version of the state's online social services application used by community agencies and organizations that have registered with DPW and signed a confidentiality agreement and contract. With the Power User

version, Helpline staff could input information on behalf of the family and submit the completed form to the County Assistance Office or CHIP contractor electronically. Families then needed to submit a signature page and income documents, plus any other required verification such as immigration cards.

Results of the over the phone application test, compared to the usual paper application process, were extremely encouraging:

- Families received a decision on the phone application in an average 27 days, compared to 40 days for submitted paper applications.
- While everyone who was offered the chance accepted an opportunity to apply over the phone, more than half of the paper applications mailed out by Helpline staff in the same period were never submitted.
- Families were willing to complete an application over the phone and had quick access to the necessary information.
- Over the phone applications took no longer than informational calls.

The project also yielded a bonus: When Helpline staff assisted families in directly applying, their morale improved.

The test was so successful that an RFP issued in April for a new Helpline contractor included the idea, and nearly all callers for children's health insurance informa-

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Tests from collaborative yield over the phone enrollments

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tion are now offered the chance to apply, except when call volume is very heavy.

Some challenges remain in streamlining the review of the over the phone applications to reach 100 percent effectiveness, and the PIC team will address them in the coming months. Pennsylvania has been invited to participate in the Process Improvement Collaborative for 2005.

Thirteen other states participated in the Collaborative to problem-solve their specific challenges in children's health coverage outreach. The outcome has yielded enrollment and renewal processes that are more family-friendly through simplified forms, personalized contact, and an enhanced understanding of the time constraints that families face. Among the lessons learned:

- **Effective renewal strategies** included heads-up postcards issued before renewal letters were mailed, and second notices sent to families that had not responded to an earlier notice. In one test, voice mail messages that included an outreach worker's beeper number

and a promise for a call back within 10 minutes were very successful, possibly because working parents could call during a break or lunch and were assured of a response.

Notices written in the family's native language were effective, as were passive renewal forms pre-populated (already filled out) with information from the family's previous application that required a response from families only if the information had changed.

- **Internal process improvements**, such as automatic referrals to CHIP when family income exceeds Medicaid eligibility, can promote the child's successful transition from one program to the other.
- **Application accuracy** can be improved with such simple methods as a reminder, posted on caseworkers' computers, to confirm a family's address and phone information every time.

For more information on the Process Improvement Collaborative in Pennsylvania and other states, contact Ann Bacharach, annbach@papartnerships.org, 717-236-5680, ext. 111.

Part 2 – Adult Coverage to focus on state-level strategies

The adult coverage outreach work of two Covering Kids and Families sites will be utilized to develop state-level strategies on adult coverage issues, in a revision approved by the National Program Office, the Southern Institute for Children and Families, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The Covering Kids and Families Part 2-Adult Coverage grant funds outreach and enrollment of eligible but uninsured adults with children. Similar to Part 1-Children's Coverage, Part 2 addresses outreach strategies, enrollment and renewal simplification, and coordination of programs to best serve families' needs.

Under a revised Part 2-Adult Coverage work plan, Wellspan Health in York and Adams Counties and Consumer Health Coalition in Allegheny County will continue their outreach to enroll eligible adults into adultBasic or Medicaid. In addition, the Pennsylvania Covering Kids and Families Coalition has contracted with consultant Terry Roth to staff the adult coverage work, including supervision of the local pilot projects and state-level advocacy. The coalition created a stand-

ing workgroup to address the waiting list issues and funding resources for adultBasic and other coverage access issues facing adults. The Adult Coverage Workgroup will meet regularly to review lessons learned locally and assess and analyze those experiences. Members will then develop policy and program recommendations, including state budget recommendations for advocacy efforts outside the parameters of the CKF grant, and share them with the Statewide CKF Coalition and like-minded organizations.

Terry Roth is an experienced advocate who has worked in Harrisburg for more than 20 years. She has been engaged in a range of coalition-building strategies and strong budget advocacy work with such diverse groups as the Girl Scouts, the PA Coalition Against Rape, and the Disabilities Budget Coalition.

Anyone interested in joining the Adult Coverage Workgroup should contact Roth at troth@paonline.com or 717-234-4195.

Notes from Harrisburg: Mini-grants, Koken heads association

Inclusiveness mini-grants available

The Pennsylvania Health Department's Bureau of Family Health is accepting mini-grant applications to promote inclusiveness for children with special health care needs.

The mini-grants of up to \$3,000 can support innovative interactive educational events, such as presentations, conference sessions, skits, trainings, forums, and workshops that would enhance community resources to promote the inclusion of children and youth with special health care needs into everyday activities. Target audiences can include medical and dental providers, community planners, employers and businesses, and policymakers.

The deadline for applying is May 15, 2005. For more information, visit the Bureau of Family Health at <http://www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health/cwp/view.asp?a=179&Q=232984>.



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Koken elected NAIC president

Pennsylvania Insurance Commissioner M. Diane Koken has been elected president of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC). She has been active in the organization since becoming Insurance Commissioner in 1997. The NAIC, based in Kansas City, MO, works to protect consumers and maintain the insurance industry's financial stability by offering financial, actuarial, legal, computer, research, market conduct and economic expertise.

News and resources

- **Working with schools:** School districts can be valuable partners in children's health outreach — after all, that's where the kids are — but school-based outreach efforts must be incorporated into the primary mission of educating students. Finding a champion who can lead the effort and link it to academic progress is a critical step. Learn more about health outreach in schools through a new Covering Kids and Families briefing paper, *Persistence Pays: Partnering with Schools*, at www.papartnerships.org/pdfs/schools_partner.pdf.

Covering Kids and Families Coalition Meeting dates, 2005

- Wednesday, March 2
- Wednesday, June 1
- Wednesday, September 7
- Wednesday, December 7

All meetings will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Hilton Harrisburg, One North Second Street, Harrisburg. Directions at www.harrisburg.hilton.com.

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