



Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

Joan L. Benso
President and CEO

116 Pine Street, Suite 430
Harrisburg, PA 17101-1244
www.papartnerships.org

David S. Feinberg
Chair of the Board

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Michael Race
717-236-5680
mrace@papartnerships.org

Pennsylvania Needs to Make Children's Health Insurance Priority for 2012 *PA Partnerships for Children Offers Guidance on Implementing Health Care Reform*

(HARRISBURG, PA) Dec. 14, 2011 – Pennsylvania has a unique opportunity in the coming year to reach the more than 100,000 children who still lack health insurance, but doing so will require quick, decisive action by state leaders, according to the commonwealth's leading children's advocacy organization.

A new report by Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children details how the commonwealth can best implement aspects of the federal Affordable Care Act, or ACA, and help reach the 5 percent of Pennsylvania children who still lack health insurance.

"Pennsylvania has long been a national leader in children's health insurance, going back to the inception of CHIP nearly two decades ago, but we have more work to do," said PPC President and CEO Joan Benso. "Governor Corbett and state lawmakers, working together, will have the chance in 2012 to enact legislation to build on our successes and reach kids who still lack health insurance and the access to quality care that such insurance provides."

The pending creation of Pennsylvania's health insurance exchange will be a prime opportunity to reach these uninsured children. The exchange, which will be established under the ACA, operates as an online marketplace where consumers can comparison shop for health insurance based on their needs and budgets.

PPC is calling on state policymakers to develop a health insurance exchange that will ensure every child has the greatest possible access to all evidence-based physical and behavioral health benefits. It should be streamlined and easy to use, and have the power to aggressively negotiate with insurers to guarantee a broad menu of insurance choices for families with children.

"We need an exchange that truly works for kids," Benso said. "We know making health insurance affordable and accessible for our youngest Pennsylvanians is a long-term

cost saver. It promotes preventive care, reduces more costly emergency medical treatment, encourages lifelong healthy habits and saves all of us money. There simply is no downside to providing our children with health insurance.”

PPC’s report outlines how Pennsylvania policymakers can use all available resources, including federal funding, to keep the commonwealth at the national forefront in providing affordable health insurance for children. The report also stresses the need for Pennsylvania to address potential shortages of health care professionals, particularly in rural areas.

The Pennsylvania Insurance Department announced in November that it will set up a state-run health insurance exchange under ACA, and it plans to apply for some available federal funding to establish the exchange. PPC recommends the commonwealth position itself to secure multiple federal grants that will help lessen state-level costs.

The report notes that federal health care reform already has benefitted Pennsylvania’s children in multiple ways. Among other things, the law prohibits insurers from requiring co-pays for preventative services, blocks insurers from dropping a child’s coverage because the child is ill, and prohibits insurers from establishing a lifetime limit of coverage.

More information on children’s health care can be found on PPC’s website at www.ppartnerships.org.

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