

Texas Update - August 2008

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Medicaid Reform Update: CMS Notes Serious Problems with Texas Medicaid Waiver Application

Earlier this month, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid services sent a letter to HHSC explaining why they are not able to approve the state's waiver application in its current form. While CMS indicated it could potentially approve using Medicaid and CHIP dollars for premium assistance for private health insurance, these changes could not be approved at this time because other areas of the application raised concern. CMS seems willing to consider the \$75 million per year for three years for "infrastructure grants," a proposal TACHC supported with information on the FQHC chronic care model, they require more information before they will approve it. CMS did, however, strongly state that the extremely limited benefit packages proposed for medically needy caretakers and the \$25,000 annual benefit limit for parents and caretaker relatives was not acceptable, noting that "there is no precedent under CMS-approved demonstrations to approve an annual benefit limit as low as \$25,000 even for an expansion population." This last item, particularly, is a great victory for the promotion of access to care. CMS recognizes that Texas must provide a level of coverage that reflects the true health needs of the populations they wish to cover. Given CMS's concerns, it is clear that substantial reform in Texas will not take place for some time.

This development in Medicaid reform is exciting because there is new opportunity to work with the state to encourage an increased focus on *access to care*, not only health coverage, as a theme for health care reform in Texas. TACHC will be working closely with HHSC staff to achieve this. Stay tuned for updates and requests for information.

National Health Center Week, 2008: A Great Success!

Texas health centers celebrated Health Center Week with a bang. Health fairs, outreach events, grand openings, and visits by elected officials marked this year's celebration. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson, Congressman Charles Gonzalez, Congressman Henry Cuellar, State Senator Robert Nichols, State Senator Carlos Uresti, State Representative Wayne Christian, and State Representative David Farabee, among many other local officials participated in this year's events. I'm sure that I've missed a few, too, so if other state or federal elected officials visited your health center, [please let me know!](#) I know many more were invited to your events, and we want to thank them for their support!

Some great media coverage too. Check out this great [article](#) in the Galveston Daily News noting that health centers provide great care to insured patients too! Health centers' health center week events also got coverage in the Toledo Chronicle (Sabine County), the Sabine County Reporter, Wilson County News, the Pleasanton Express News, the Uvalde Leader News, and the Times Record News (Wichita Falls). I know there was more media coverage out there, so please [send me](#) any articles, links, or pictures you'd like to share. I hope the media tools on TACHC's website, www.tachc.org/mediatools, were helpful in your media outreach!

And what about TACHC's health center week advocacy drive contest??

CONGRATULATIONS to The HOPE Clinic in Houston – also known as the Asian American Health Coalition. With 17 new staff advocates added to our advocacy network during the health center week drive, they now have one new staff advocate for every 218 patients served. They will receive a free registration to TACHC's annual conference, a \$500 dollar value. The HOPE Clinic edged out other centers – closest behind them were **Community Action Corporation of South Texas** and **Longview Wellness Center**. If you're interested in how your health center fared in the contest, [contact me](#). Thanks to everyone who signed up during health center week!

Unfortunately, we did not meet our goal of 250 new staff advocates this year, getting a total of 82 new advocates. Let's work hard to get new health center staff signed up before the end of the year to be all the more prepared for the 2009 state legislative session! New advocates can register [HERE](#).

NACHC Releases New Report Addressing the Primary Care Provider Shortage

As part of its ACCESS series, NACHC released its latest installment, [ACCESS Transformed: Building A Primary Care Workforce for the Twenty-First Century](#). The report noted that Texas health centers would need 4,584 more primary care providers to make sure every Texan has access to the primary care that protects health and cuts costs. As a step to getting there quickly and responsibly, Texas health centers need 1,993 more primary care providers by 2015. Texas Health centers also got media coverage during health center week around this issue: See the [article](#) from the Austin American Statesman.

HHSC Requesting FQHC's Feedback on the Format and Layout of the Texas Medicaid Provider Manual

Recently, several health center staff participated in a focus group to provide feedback on the format and layout of the Medicaid Provider Manual The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is changing the format and layout of the *Texas Medicaid Provider Procedures Manual* (TMPPM). Provider feedback from the electronic survey at will be used to improve the user-friendliness of the 2010 TMPPM edition. Please take five minutes to complete the survey. You can find the survey here:

<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB2285Q4J89R7>

Texas Health Steps Online Provider Education

Looking for continuing education opportunities for your providers? The Texas Health and Human Services Commission currently offers the following series of computer-based training opportunities for Texas Health Steps providers:

- [Overview](#)

- [Adolescent Health Screening](#)
- Identifying and Treating Children with Asthma
- [Cultural Competence](#)
- [Dental Health For Primary Care Providers](#)
- [Dental Screening By Dental Professionals](#)
- [Developmental Screening](#)
- [Hearing & Vision Screening](#)
- [Immunization](#)
- [Introduction to the Medical Home](#)
- [Mental Health Screening](#)
- [Newborn Hearing Screening](#)
- [Newborn Screening](#)
- [Nutrition Screening](#)
- [Pharmacy](#)
- [Weight Management](#)

The state is working with the University of Texas to offer continuing education credit for this online training. You can access the trainings at www.txhealthsteps.com.

Community Health Vote- Still Going Strong After Health Center Week

Just because health center week is over doesn't mean that Texas health centers shouldn't be active in working with community members to help your patients register to vote. Click [here](#) for more information on the community health center civic engagement project, and remember to contact [me](#), [Yvette Ammerman](#), or [Marc Wetherhorn](#) at NACHC if you want more information or want to see if there are local community organizations you can work with on this.

New Advocates Can Register <[HERE](#).