

Texas Update - June 2007

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CHIP Enrollment Numbers Still Falling

Enrollment in the CHIP program fell by over 5,000 kids between May and June. From April to May, enrollment declined by more than 17,000 children. June is the fourth straight month that the CHIP program has lost enrollees to fall to just over 300,000 kids - a 25,000 drop since December 2006. HHSC attributes the enrollment decline to the end of an amnesty policy for families with incomplete applications put in place to counteract the extensive problems with the integrated eligibility and enrollment system. An HHSC spokesperson indicated that they have a great deal more confidence in their eligibility system than they have had in previous months as an explanation for ending the amnesty policy. Whatever the cause, advocates are urging continued improvement in the eligibility system and quick implementation of the new policies in HB 109, the CHIP restoration bill that passed this session, to stem the tide of enrollment declines.

Legislative and Policy Developments

The deadline for the Governor to sign or veto bills, June 17th, has passed with several bills and budget line items falling to the veto pen. Legislation important to health centers, however, such as the HB 1579, the Medicaid after hours care bill, and HB 1973 related to medical licensure, made the cut. Thankfully, given the enrollment declines mentioned above, so did HB 109, the CHIP Restoration bill.

CHIP

HHSC is moving quickly to revise program rules for CHIP to incorporate the policy changes that will take effect September 1, including 12 months continuous eligibility, revised asset test, net rather than gross income eligibility determinations, and the revised waiting period policy. HHSC is taking this opportunity to revise some rules that will make the eligibility process more seamless for families. TACHC participated in the stakeholder input process for these rules that occurred earlier this month.

Women's Health Program

Thanks to those of you who provided comment on the proposed amendment to the Women's Health Program regarding certain procedure codes and FQHC reimbursement

for up to three visits per year. A copy of WHP final amendment is attached. No word yet on when CMS will approve it. Our legislature mandated the FQHC payment revision take effect September 1.

Three-Share Program to Cover Low-Income Parents

HHSC has also submitted a revision to a current waiver application for Galveston County's Three-Share Program - an insurance coverage program for low-income, working parents where costs are shared among the Federal/State CHIP funds, the employer, and the employee. The waiver revision will allow communities statewide to participate in this program which uses a cost-sharing approach intended to allow for more affordable monthly health premiums. There is a lot of flexibility in benefit structure and delivery design, but the Federal government requires that eligibility for the program remain consistent across the state. Texas has determined its eligibility requirements to be parents of CHIP or Medicaid enrolled or eligible children who are working for a certified, participating employer and living at or below 200% FPL. Local communities will decide the employer certification process. As with all waiver programs, the Federal government is in control of final approval and implementation timelines. We'll keep you posted!

Webcast Trainings for Health Center Front Line Staff Off to a Good Start

On June 7th, more than 80 Texas health center front line staff registered to participate in a webcast training on Pregnant Women's Medicaid and the Women's Health Program hosted by TACHC and the Texas Primary Care Office. This event kicked off a series of trainings scheduled this summer to provide health center front desk staff with the tools they need to help clients connect with benefit programs they may be eligible for. The next webcast covering CHIP and Children's Medicaid is scheduled for Monday July 9 at 12pm. In August, we'll host the third call in this series related to programs for elderly health center clients. It's not too late to register - you can sign up online at <http://www.tachc.org/About/Events.asp>

CHIP Perinatal Program Refresher

TACHC is hearing from member centers that there are still plenty of questions out there about the CHIP Perinatal program. We hope to address some of the questions during the upcoming webcast on CHIP and Children's Medicaid. Also, included here is a quick summary of the program with links to state resources for providers:

Who is eligible? The unborn child of pregnant women who are uninsured, do not qualify for Medicaid, and meet certain income eligibility requirements. This means pregnant, US citizen women living between 185% and 200% of FPL or non-US citizen pregnant women living below 185% of poverty (the income limit for Medicaid for pregnant women). Technically, however, the enrollee is the *unborn child* so it can receive needed prenatal care.

What services are covered?

Benefits of CHIP perinatal coverage include:

- Up to 20 prenatal visits.
- Prescriptions and prenatal vitamins.
- Labor with delivery of the child. (Your coverage will depend on your income. Some women may be asked to apply for Emergency Medicaid to cover their hospital stay.)
- Two visits for the mother after the baby is born.
- Regular check-ups, immunizations and prescriptions for the baby after the baby leaves the hospital.

What services are not covered?

Some of the services not covered include:

- A mother's hospital visit for services not related to labor with delivery, such as a broken arm or false labor.
- Specialty treatment for the mother, such as care for asthma, heart conditions, mental health or substance abuse.

You can find links to information about client enrollment, provider reimbursement, and information about participating CHIP Perinatal health plans at the state's website: <http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/chip/perinatal/index.htm>. But if your questions are still not answered, please contact TACHC, and we will work with you to get the answers you need: kcoburn@tachc.org or 512-329-5959.

National Health Center Week Is Just Around the Corner!

Summer is here which means National Health Center Week is just around the corner. August 5-11, 2007 will mark this year's community health center celebration centering around the theme of "America's Health Centers: Your Health Care Home." Visit www.healthcenterweek.com for tips and tools to create a great health center week event and keep an eye on TACHC's website during the month of July for Texas specific templates for press releases, fact sheets, and letters to the editor. And, keep us informed! If you are planning events, particularly if they include elected officials, please let TACHC and NACHC know about your plans. You can even post your event at http://www.healthcenterweek.com/tools_eventPosting.asp. Congratulations to the Community Health Center of Lubbock for being the first Texas health center to upload their health center week events!

Upcoming Webcast on Developing a Media Strategy for Your Health Center - Tune In July 11

As part of our marketing and outreach initiatives, TACHC will be hosting a webcast entitled "Creating a Media Strategy for Your Health Center." Amy Simmons, Director of Communications and Marc Wetherhorn, National Advocacy Director for the National Association of Community Health Centers will present practical tips and tools for:

- developing continued and ongoing relationships with media,
- using media effectively to highlight your health center in your community,

- understanding how best to utilize media in conjunction with visits from elected officials

The webcast is just in time for National Health Center Week, August 5-11, so you can use these skills in developing Health Center Week events. The webcast, scheduled for July 11, 2007 from 1:00 to 2:30 CST will be free to TACHC members with a \$35 charge for non-members. Each participating individual can register online at

<http://www.tachc.org/About/Events.asp>

Registry Link for New Advocates: Remember to ask your friends and colleagues to join in the voice for community health centers:

<http://votervoice.net/groups/tachc/?registeronly=true>