

## **Texas Update - November 2007**

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### **Commonwealth Fund Pledges Support to New Community Health Center Cost Effectiveness Study that will Include Texas Health Centers!**

Recently, the Texas Update reported that Texas health centers are participating in a cost effectiveness study conducted by researchers at Brandeis University. This study, entitled the Ingredients of High Performing Community Health Centers, will examine cost effectiveness measures for health center in three states, California, Texas, and Massachusetts, and then perform case studies of particularly well functioning centers to uncover best practices for effective health center operations. Earlier this month, the Commonwealth Fund elected to fund this two-year study, providing much of the support for data infrastructure development that will be required for analysis. TACHC will fund aspects of the study that focus on Texas centers. Keep an eye out for updates and requests for information regarding the study.

### **Medicaid Reform Update**

The Texas Medicaid reform process is continuing to move forward. The state requested public comment on several key decisions areas for the reform concept paper they will submit to CMS earlier this month. TACHC's comments are attached. The state intends to submit the full concept paper to CMS on November 30 and simultaneously release the document to the public. According to staff remarks at a recent stakeholder forum, HHSC intends to collect public input on the concept paper at the same time they are waiting for feedback from CMS on the paper. As they still plan to submit the full waiver application by January of 2008, it will be important for advocates to watch this process carefully and provide comments. As of Friday afternoon, no concept paper document has been posted... keep an eye on [this website](#) to download a copy as soon as it is available.

Legislative involvement in the Medicaid reform process is also getting started in the coming week. On December 6 at 10am, the first meeting of the Legislative Oversight Committee for Medicaid Reform will meet in the Texas Senate Chamber under the direction of Chair Jane Nelson to review the Medicaid reform concept paper. Other members of this joint committee include Senators Janek, Duncan, and Zaffirini along with Representatives Delisi, Dukes, Davis, and Zerwas. The Joint Legislative Oversight Committee was created in SB 10 to facilitate reform efforts and ensure public

involvement in the process. You can also watch the hearing online at [here](#) - just go to this link on the date and time of the hearing.

### **Two San Antonio Health Centers Receive Financial Support from Methodist Healthcare Ministries**

Congratulations to El Centro del Barrio/CentroMed and Communicare Health Centers, both serving San Antonio! Each organization received over \$1 million dollars from Methodist Healthcare Ministries to provide medical and dental services to underserved populations in their area. These awards were part of a \$4.9 million commitment to local organizations serving South Texas communities in 2008. Well done!

### **Funding for Strategic Initiatives in the Frew Settlement is Getting Off the Ground**

As part of the Frew vs. Hawkins settlement agreement, a multi-year lawsuit against the Health and Human Services Commission charging that the state did not meet its obligations to provide access to appropriate medical care and screening for Medicaid children, the 80<sup>th</sup> Legislature approved significant Medicaid payment rate increases for pediatric medical and dental services as well as a one time appropriation of \$150 million for strategic initiatives that will improve access to care for Medicaid children in Texas. Governor Perry appointed an advisory committee to advise HHSC on which initiatives to fund with these dollars. This group began its work earlier this fall. HHSC has requested budget authority to fund the first round of projects, including the promotion of a dental home for children, the oral evaluation and application of fluoride varnish in the medical home setting, and the creation of a mobile dental unit operating in the Rio Grande Valley. The committee will continue to review other project ideas. It was announced at the most recent Frew committee meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> that the committee will continue to accept proposal ideas from the public on how best to spend the \$150 million. Send your ideas to Olga Rodriguez at [olgaoralia.rodriguez@hhsc.state.tx.us](mailto:olgaoralia.rodriguez@hhsc.state.tx.us) and please copy [TACHC](#)!

### **Information on Participating in the Statewide Foster Care Managed Care Program in Medicaid That Launches This Spring**

If you are interested in being a provider in the statewide foster care managed care program, you should have the uniform contract in hand. The program is slated to begin transferring enrollment of foster children from regular Medicaid to the foster care managed care Medicaid program in the spring. If you don't have any questions about the contract, you should get it signed and send it to:

Superior HealthPlan  
Attn: Denise Herrera  
6070 Gateway, Suite 400  
El Paso, TX 79905

Don't forget to get a signed copy back for your records! For questions for Superior, please contact either Irene Armendariz @ (915)778-7835 ext. 22310 or Denise Herrera @ (915)778-7835 ext. 22411. For questions for TACHC, give Cecile Carson a call.

**Update on HHSC Efforts to Improve the Eligibility System - Including Opportunities for Public Comment**

After the dissolution of the integrated eligibility contract with Texas Access Alliance earlier this year due to poor performance and the frustrating experiences many families are having in applying for and maintaining their benefits, the state is now accepting public comment on their latest RFP for integrated eligibility services. You can find the documents [here](#). The state will accept comments on this RFP through 5pm on December 31, 2007. It's not clear at this time when they hope to have the new contractor and systems in place.

HHSC has adopted a new policy for families who have been waiting for more than twice the legal amount of time (45 days) the state has to process benefits applications - instead of being certified for 6 months, these applicants will be certified for 12 months from their original application date. This eligibility term applies only to families who have waited for benefit certification past when the state would have sent a renewal notice for 6 months coverage - about 90 days - because the state dropped the ball. This new policy is great news for families who have experienced significant delays - it also underscores the problems still plaguing the Texas eligibility system.

An internal HHSC workgroup is also working to redesign benefit application forms to make them easier to understand and complete. More information on that process and instructions on how to provide stakeholder input is available [here](#). Public comment is due by December 14.

**New Advocates are Encouraged To Register With Our Advocacy Network By Clicking [HERE](#). And thanks!**