

Extending FMAP for Children's Coverage

President Obama's proposed FY2011 budget includes \$25.5 billion to extend the temporary increase in the Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentage (the share of the Medicaid program the federal government pays) that passed in last year's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. This policy is currently set to expire in December 2010. If extended, California could receive up to \$3 billion in federal assistance that would allow the state to keep from severely cutting our healthcare coverage programs.

Last year's ARRA FMAP increase was critically important in preserving California's Medi-Cal program. In early 2009, semi-annual reporting requirements for children were scheduled to be implemented, which would have resulted in thousands of children falling off coverage. The maintenance of eligibility provision in ARRA required state Medicaid programs to preserve their eligibility and enrollment procedures to receive the increased FMAP. California's state legislature restored the annual renewals for children in Medi-Cal to take full advantage of the increased federal funding available.

In order to protect and preserve California's Medi-Cal program and the millions of children and families who depend on it, CHC and its partners are asking our California Congressional delegation to support extending the temporary FMAP increase for six months and maintain current eligibility standards for Medi-Cal and the Healthy Families Program.

California cannot solve its current \$20 billion deficit through continued cuts and a few revenue generating strategies. We must seek additional federal assistance to prevent the loss of basic healthcare services for those in greatest need and to buy time for an economic recovery that will boost state revenues in California. To learn more, contact Michelle Wood, CHC Policy Analyst, michelle@chc-inc.org.

Coalition Fights for *Every Woman Counts*

The California Assembly Budget Committee held a hearing on February 8th about recent policy changes to the *Cancer Detection Program: Every Woman Counts (EWC)*. The program, which provides breast cancer screening and diagnostic services to low-income women in California, recently cut eligibility for women ages 40-49 and froze all new enrollments.

Community Health Councils and members of the Coalition for Health & Justice testified to the local impacts of the EWC policy changes. CHC presented the Committee with a letter to the California Department of Public Health from more than twenty organizations opposed to the policy changes. The letter and testimony highlighted the following points:

- Women of color are at increased risk for breast cancer mortality due to inadequate access to life-saving screenings.
- Cutting services will result in later stage diagnosis and poorer prognosis for the County's underserved women.
- Local safety-net providers are struggling with the loss of EWC funding.
- The EWC cuts produce small short-term savings but increase long-term expenses due to late-stage treatment costs.

As a result of advocacy efforts around the EWC policy changes, legislators have introduced two bills. SB836 (Oropeza) provides breast cancer screenings to any individual with a physician's referral and restores eligibility to women ages 40-49. AB1640 (Evans and Nava) requires DPH to notify the Joint Legislative Budget Committee at least 90 days prior to changing eligibility requirements for services or reducing access to screening services.

For more information on these bills or *Every Woman Counts*, contact Laura Ewing, CHC Policy Analyst, laura@chc-inc.org.

National Interest in Addressing Obesity Rises

The Obama Administration has made obesity prevention and control a top priority. The President's budget proposes a new *Healthy Food Financing Initiative* to increase the availability of affordable, healthy foods in underserved communities. To support the Initiative, the Departments of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, and Treasury have partnered to make over \$400 million available in grants, loans, tax credits, and technical assistance to help communities attract grocery stores, establish and expand farmers' markets, and transform corner stores to carry fresh food.

The program is modeled after the *Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative*. The Pennsylvania Initiative has shown that well-targeted financing and technical assistance

can create viable businesses that increase access to healthier foods while also creating jobs and supporting broader development efforts to revitalize distressed communities. CHC's *Community Health and Education* policy area is excited about this new initiative and potential source of much needed funding. CHC is working to attract grocery stores, farmers' markets and other healthy food outlets to South Los Angeles using community-driven strategies.

President Obama also established a Childhood Obesity Taskforce to develop an interagency coordinated strategy to solve the problem of childhood obesity within a generation. The Taskforce will make recommendations to meet four objectives: ensuring access to healthy, affordable food; increasing physical activity in schools and communities; providing healthier food in schools; and empowering parents with the information and tools to make good choices for themselves and their families. In addition, the President charged First Lady Michelle Obama to lead a national public awareness effort to encourage involvement in national obesity prevention and control efforts by the public, nonprofit and private sectors as well as parents and youth. Her *Let's Move* (www.letsmove.gov) campaign combines information, resources and social marketing including the Department of Agriculture's new *Food Atlas* (www.ers.usda.gov/FoodAtlas), an interactive database that maps healthy food resources, obesity rates and socioeconomic characteristics down to the local level across the country.

The Administration is also proposing to fund a new *Big Cities Initiative* with \$20 million in grants for up to ten of the country's largest cities to address three public health priorities: tobacco prevention and control; obesity prevention and control (through improved nutrition and physical activity); and chronic disease detection and management. The Initiative is intended to build upon the best practices and lessons learned from communities funded through the ARRA stimulus bill to test wide-scale application of evidence-based policy, systems and environmental change strategies.

CHC Releases *Bridging the Health Divide: California's Certified Application Assistants*

More than 20,000 individuals in California are trained as Certified Application Assistants to help families enroll in and maintain their public healthcare coverage. While the profession has evolved through the years, very little is known about this dynamic workforce that bridges children and families to healthcare coverage and services. CHC surveyed CAAs in Los Angeles County to assess the potential to advance the profession.

The resulting report, *Bridging the Health Divide: California's Certified Application Assistants*, shows that CAAs are educated and informed, experienced, mirrors to the communities served and target populations, and strategically located at sites where families can naturally access information. Forty-one percent of CAAs report holding associates or bachelors degrees; 46% have more than five years experience as CAAs; 80% speak Spanish; and 39% are connected with clinics or providers. With health reform poised to change the healthcare landscape, California's CAA infrastructure will provide an invaluable tool in helping individuals and families successfully navigate and utilize any program.

Bridging the Health Divide: California's Certified Application Assistants is available on the new Community Health Councils website at www.chc-inc.org/policy-briefs. It is the first in a series of policy briefs that focus on outreach and enrollment efforts for children and families eligible for but not enrolled in public health coverage. Funding for the survey was provided by The California Endowment.

Be Counted!

Non-profits across the state are asked to remind people of the importance of being counted in *United States Census 2010*. Census data determine the number of seats each state will have in the US House of Representatives. Census data can also determine the allocation of federal funds for community services. For every 100 people not counted, a community risks losing an estimated \$1.2 million over the next decade for federally funded programs including Medicaid and maternal and child health programs. Census questionnaires will be delivered to households beginning this month and, with only 10 questions, usually take less than 10 minutes to complete. By law, the Census Bureau cannot share an individual's responses with anyone including other federal agencies or law enforcement. For more information on the United States Census 2010, visit www.nonprofitscount.org.

Upcoming Events

Community Forum on the California Budget Crisis.

Friday, March 12th, 11:30am-3pm. A teach-in on the California budget crisis: how it impacts our communities and what we can do to take action. Featuring Jean Ross of the California Budget Project and a community dialogue with legislators including the Honorable Karen Bass. Downtown Labor Center, 675 S. Park View Street, Los Angeles 90057. Contact Astrid Campos at acampos@communitychange.org.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ... CONTACT
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