



## ATTENTION HEALTH CARE ADVOCATES : HANG ON FOR A BUMPY RIDE !!!

The road ahead is dangerously uncertain. Last year our Department of Health & Hospitals (DHH) faced huge cuts and was spared by a one time windfall from the federal government. No such silver bullet can be expected in 2004. Along with higher education, we can expect the DHH budget to face the most substantial cuts again.

**Expansion is not driving Medicaid Cost Increases:** Growth in Medicaid enrollment, such as what we have experienced with the LaCHIP expansion, **is not a strong factor in the growth of Medicaid expenditures.** Families USA, a national health advocacy organization reports that new enrollees from SCHIP expansion did not have a large impact on Medicaid costs, with estimates at about 15%. Medicaid expenditures are increasing for many of the same reasons that costs in private health insurance are increasing: rising cost of prescription drugs and the increasing cost of health care services such as hospitalization and nursing home care. (Families USA, 'Preserving Medicaid in Tough Times' 1/03)

**Medicaid – A Powerful Economic Engine:** What is less understood is the unique role Medicaid plays in stimulating business and state economies. State Medicaid spending brings federal funds into our state's economy under a federal match formula. For every \$1 Louisiana spends on Medicaid, \$3 in federal funds are brought into the state. These dollars support vast health care networks of providers, hospitals, health clinics and home health services. Cuts in Medicaid spending reduce our ability to draw down federal funds, which further reduces our overall revenue. When people have Medicaid coverage they seek more cost-effective preventive care, the costs of which states can share with the federal government through the match formula.

**How cuts hurt vulnerable populations and programs:** Reducing services, benefits or the numbers of enrollees will increase unmet needs of people who have few, if any, other options for getting health care. Research suggests that people with inadequate or no coverage often wait until a crisis before seeking care. Emergency care is more costly than preventive care. Public and private facilities must ultimately pass on these uncompensated care costs to consumers through higher fees for services and higher costs for coverage programs. As the government (Medicaid) pays less because of cuts, employers and consumers will have to pay more, hence pushing more people into the category of uninsured or under-insured, and perpetuating a vicious cycle. Medicaid has no federal expenditure caps therefore states can reap greater benefits by covering more people through Medicaid than waiting for them to utilize public or private facilities as uninsured patients and trying to seek compensation after care has been given.

A new survey reports that Louisiana has about **77,500** eligible but uninsured children and about **402,000** uninsured adults whose income is at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. Research suggests that if parents have coverage, their children are more likely to get regular care!

### **ALL STATES ALERT: National SCHIP Crisis** Featured state: Texas

An article in the Austin American Statesman, November 16, 2003 bemoans the sad fate of **54,000** children dropped from SCHIP coverage in Texas due to budgetary constraints, and more cuts are expected! Texas has the highest percentage of uninsured children in America, almost 27%.

**LA Covering Kids & Families (La-CKF)  
Coalitions: **UPDATES & NEWS****

**Northeast Coalition:** Led by Donna Winters of the Children's Coalition of Northeast LA. This is a strong and well established consortium of dedicated organizations, agencies and health care providers committed to children's issues. They are based in Monroe and are working to mobilize parishes in that region. They helped coordinate a very successful health fair during the annual back-to-school campaign that had over 4,000 attendees at the Monroe Civic Center. This coalition is also spearheading some new strategies to help ensure that families get linked to providers when they first apply for the program. They are also working with regional Medicaid staff to address renewal issues.  
**Contact Donna @ (318) 323- 8775**

**Central Louisiana Coalition:** Lin Stewart coordinates this coalition through CHRISTUS St. Frances Cabrini Hospital. This fall Medicaid Region 6 Coordinator Lester Turner and Lin collaborated to reach out to judges to ensure that families coming through the courts were made aware of the programs for children's health coverage.  
**Next meeting: Grant Parish: January 8, 2004, 11-1pm** at the City Hall Conference Room, Colfax, Louisiana  
**Contact Lin @ (318) 561- 4147**

**Southeast Coalition:** This coalition is growing to include representatives from 23 parishes of Southeastern LA, including Baton Rouge and New Orleans. We are excited about our new lead agency, the Children's Bureau, Inc. in New Orleans, and our new Coordinator Pastor Torin Sanders. The Southeast Coalition organized a rally at the St. Thomas Health Clinic in New Orleans to mobilize local pastors for outreach in their communities. **Next meeting: January 22, 2004 10am.** LSU Ag Center Conference Rm, 21454 Koop Dr Ste 1-D, Mandeville

**"Rolling RENEWALS"...**  
**made easier with NEW service !!!**

Families will soon be able to renew their children who have been on LaCHIP/Medicaid by calling the hotline number to either request a renewal form to be mailed to their home or actually complete the renewal form over the phone through an automated service. Medicaid officials expect this will help families maintain coverage. **CALL TOLL-FREE**

**1-877-2LaCHIP(252-2447)**

**New La-CKF Regional Coalitions developing!**

**Northwest:** Betty Stanley of Region 7 Medicaid spoke at a recent coalition meeting in Red River parish. This Northwest region has been successful at reaching out to Hispanic populations. However, more must be done statewide in communities that have complex barriers to enrolling such as language and cultural sensitivities. Next meeting TBA.

**Southwest:** Planned in collaboration with Susan Ledger of Medicaid Region 5. **Next meeting: January 29, 2004 2- 4pm** at St. Patrick's Hospital Garber Auditorium in Lake Charles.

**South Central:** Planning in collaboration with Carol Stephens of Medicaid Region 4, to have a meeting in Lafayette in February 2004. Date & location TBA.  
**For all new coalitions contact Central LA Coordinator Lin Stewart @ (318) 561- 4147**



**Contact Torin @ (504) 512- 0150**

**Interested in health coverage issues?  
Want to get involved in your community? Join Us! Contacts listed below.**

**Louisiana Covering Kids & Families (La-CKF)**

**Statewide**

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Donna Winters... ..(318) 325-3869

**Medicaid Outreach Coordinators**

**Statewide:** Kyle Viator.....(225) 342-6043

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**Baton Rouge:** Doretha Davis ... (225) 922-1685

**Lafayette:** Carol Stephens... ..(337) 262-5228

**Lake Charles:** Susan Ledger... ..(337) 491-2782

**Mandeville:** Linda Thomas... ..(985) 871-1275

**Monroe:** Geniece Percy... ..(318) 368-3166

**New Orleans:** Angela Chalk... ..(504) 599-0649

**Shreveport:** Betty Stanley... ..(318) 862-9906

**Thibodaux:** Theresa Fussell ....(985) 449-5152

Louisiana Covering Kids & Families (La-CKF) at Agenda for Children is part of a national initiative sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The overall mission is to reduce the number of uninsured children and adults in America and the 3 goals of this grant are:

1. To coordinate & conduct outreach
2. To simplify enrollment & renewal processes
3. To coordinate health coverage programs

Additionally, we build coalitions that work together to ensure all eligible people in Louisiana get and stay covered.

Visit the La-CKF website for more information about our regional coalitions, partners, news and events, fast facts, and links for other related children's health coverage issues.

***We're on the web!* [www.lacoveringkids.com](http://www.lacoveringkids.com)**

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