

NATIONAL NEWS

TOUGH CHOICES: *COST CONTAINMENT*

These are difficult times for state Medicaid and SCHIP programs. As multiple states face fiscal crisis, many are looking at cost containment strategies that may impact both Medicaid and SCHIP programs in order to balance state budgets.

Each state's Medicaid and SCHIP programs are unique. For states with separate SCHIP programs, there is greater program flexibility. While this provides more cost containment opportunities for states, states choosing to expand coverage through Medicaid must follow Medicaid rules in Title XXI statute. Determining the cost containment strategies to recommend requires tough choices and education. The savings these cost containment strategies represent need to be weighed against their impact on children's health. Cost containment strategies that states may consider when facing a fiscal crisis include some of the following:

Potential Areas of Cost Containment for States

- Provider and MCO payment freezes or reductions
- Increasing premiums and fees
- Eligibility restrictions
- Premium assistance
- Limiting enrollment
- Prescription drug cost containment
- Application/process changes
- Delivery system changes
- Restructuring of benefits
- Program management

As many of us in the field know, costs do not disappear when children are cut or drop from of a program because of cost containment efforts. States often see higher expenditures for uncompensated care and emergency room utilization. Other costs, such as school days lost due to illness and parents missing work to care for their sick children who no longer have healthcare coverage, are harder to quantify.

Be a voice for positive changes if your state is considering cost containment strategies that impact Medicaid and SCHIP. Make sure your voice is heard so your state makes the right choice for children!

WHAT'S UP WITH THE NETWORK

The NCKF Network has seen exciting growth since its start up a year ago! Among the highlights from the past year and a hint of things to come are:

- Increased membership to 147 individuals and 77 organizations representing 35 states
- Brought together 40 representatives from 19 states for the Inaugural Meeting
- Adopted operating principles and bylaws (*to view visit CHC website or request copy*).
- Advanced a platform of priority issues
- Launched regional convenings giving members *opportunities to share information, knowledge and expertise at the regional level and to move and advance promising practices, policy and advocacy efforts*
- Hosted two national tele-conferences
- Implemented membership dues (*if your organization has not received the membership dues invoice, please contact CHC, Catherine Sepulveda at 323.295-9372*)
- Convened monthly meetings of the 4 established committees and the Leadership Committee
- Conducted network analysis (*results forthcoming*).

We have exciting opportunities ahead as we round out 2008 and move into 2009. The NCKF Network is truly a collaborative effort! We have structured the network to facilitate membership engagement. To be successful, it is imperative that we have everyone's full participation and commitment to achieve our goals.

Register Today for Mid-West Regional Convening! *"Healthcare + Education = Healthy Communities: Why Schools Fit the Equation."* **Dates:** July 23-24. **Location:** Marriott Indianapolis Downtown. **Highlights:** National, regional, and state focus. **More Information:** Visit www.ckfindiana.org. Conference Registration Fee Scholarships are available for NCKF members. Contact Sondra Gardetto at sgardetto@ckfindiana.org.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:
**LOUISIANA CHRISTUS SCHUMPERT HEALTH SYSTEM
 AND SUTTON CHILDREN'S MEDICAL CENTER**

Michelle Lafitte, LaCHIP Program Marketing Specialist for CHRISTUS Schumpert Health System and Sutton Children's Medical Center, is a champion for children's health coverage. A former news anchor, Michelle's passion for the children and families of Louisiana led her to take on the challenging position as the Outreach Coordinator for Caddo Parish. She is charged with identifying uninsured children throughout the region and offering LaCHIP to those children and their families. As an active member of her community, Michelle finds that her celebrity helps her connect with people and she is now known as the "LaCHIP Lady."

Michelle is passionate about LaCHIP because she believes she would have been a LaCHIP kid if it had been available when she was a child. Her passion for children's health coverage leads her around Caddo Parish connecting with families and dispelling the idea that LaCHIP is a "hand out."

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Want to be a Member Spotlight? If you are looking for an opportunity to recognize one of your staff or to highlight a solution or resource for Network members, please forward your information by the third Thursday of the month to: Amy Ellrod: aellrod@nhhealthykids.com

The support she receives from her organization and her community allows her to make strong connections and help those in need. She believes the more connections made, the more people feel comfortable talking about these issues and helping each other with their common goals.

LaCHIP is fortunate to have such a strong advocate for children's health coverage. The work Michelle is doing in Caddo Parish has decreased the rate of uninsured children in Louisiana and has increased awareness about the importance of children's health coverage.

To learn more, contact Michelle Lafitte at (318) 681-7525 or michelle.lafitte@christushealth.org.

COMMITTEES *SIGN UP TODAY!*

Advocacy/Policy : For those who want to get involved in advocacy activities around SCHIP and Medicaid rule changes, this is the committee to join! Contact Diane Ragbeer of the Children's Trust in Florida at diana@thechildrenstrust.org.

Communications: If you have creative talent and would like to write articles for the monthly newsletter, we are looking for writers and readers. Contact Nancy Whitman, Nevada CKF, at nwhitman@healthinsight.org

Education: Conference planners and educators, join

this committee! If you have a knack for planning educational teleconferences, contact David Roos of CKF Indiana at droos@ckfindiana.org or Anne Joseph of Covering Kentucky Kids and Families at an-joseph@earthlink.net.

Membership: This committee is moving and shaking and increasing our membership. If you like talking to people, here is your chance. Contact Barbara Luksch with Hawaii Covering Kids at coverkids@aol.com.

RESOURCES

National Maternal and Child Health Clearinghouse www.nmchc.org
A non-profit, federally-funded program that disseminates educational material on issues pertaining to the health of mothers and children.

Institute for Healthcare Advancement www.iha4health.org
Empowering people to better health. IHA has health literacy resources, books, and conferences for professionals and consumers.

National Immigration Law Center (NILC) www.nilc.org
NILC works nationally to protect and promote the rights of low-income immigrants and their family members.

Get Ready for Back to School! Planning guides and communications team staff are available to help. Visit www.covertheuninsured.com



"We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future." (FDR)

Credits: Nancy Whitman, Nevada Covering Kids and Families; Amy Ellrod, New Hampshire Healthy Kids; Diana Cook, Wyoming Department of Health/SCHIP; Caroline Rivas, Community Health Councils/California CKF. Edited by: Janice Taylor, Community Health Councils.