

# NATIONAL NEWS

## RETENTION INITIATIVE:

Guest Writer: Judi Cramer, Southern Institute on Children and Families

Retaining eligible children and adults in Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) has become a central strategy in reducing the number of uninsured in the United States. Multiple research studies indicate that most of the enrollment losses occur at the time of renewal for Medicaid and SCHIP. Furthermore, literature consistently shows that most failures to renew are due to procedural issues, such as a failure to return a renewal form, not ineligibility for coverage. By focusing on improving eligibility systems at renewal, states can increase the efficiency and accuracy of their eligibility determination processes resulting in higher retention rates for eligible children and adults.

The Southern Institute's experience across the United States through the *Covering Kids & Families* initiative and other initiatives is common procedural problems that interfere with maintaining Medicaid and SCHIP coverage have been identified. These include more frequent than yearly eligibility review periods, complex renewal forms, extensive verifications and lack of coordination between Medicaid and SCHIP policies and procedures. As evidenced by research, the transition of individuals on and off of Medicaid and SCHIP contributes substantially to the total number of uninsured individuals, especially children.

The *Retention Initiative: Achieving Stability in Medicaid and SCHIP Coverage* is a two-year effort funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which began in April 2007. The Southern Institute leads the initiative to increase the rate of retention of eligible children and adults in Medicaid and SCHIP by encouraging Medicaid and SCHIP programs to adopt changes in policies and procedures designed to improve retention rates.

The Southern Institute assists state teams from Alabama, Florida, Iowa, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Texas and Washington through specialized consultation and technical assistance to help the state teams: (a) implement simplified eligibility policies and processes that improve and streamline the renewal processes for Medicaid and SCHIP and (b) ensure accuracy of their eligibility determination processes at renewal to decrease inappropriate Medicaid and SCHIP closures. Data analysis and process mapping of the Medicaid and SCHIP renewal processes conducted by the state teams have identified opportunities for improvement strategies. Strategies designed to simplify the renewal process for the recipients and increase efficiency in eligibility determination offices are being implemented. Teams are measuring the impact, positive and negative, of the implemented strategies.

*(continued on page 4)*

## WHAT'S UP WITH THE NETWORK

***Save the Dates—January 2009!***



### Families USA Health Action Conference

**January 29–31.** For more information visit: <http://www.familiesusa.org/>

### NCKF Network Second Annual Meeting

*(In conjunction with Families USA Health Action conference—Washington, D.C.)*

**January 27** 9:30a.m.—5:30p.m.  
6:30—9:00p.m. Dinner event

**January 28th** 8:30a.m.—12:30p.m.  
2:00p.m. Educational visits on the Hill/Distribute 2009 NCKF Calendar  
(tentative schedule times-subject to change)

## PARTICIPATE IN CREATING THE 2009 FAMILY STORY WALL CALENDAR!

Contribute to the NCKF Network's educational tool – a 12-Month Family Story Wall Calendar which will showcase Medicaid/SCHIP [stories from at least 12 states](#). For more information on how to participate, contact Michelle Wood at [michelle@chc-inc.org](mailto:michelle@chc-inc.org). [Deadline extended to November 14th!](#)

These wall calendars will be a great tool for organizations to use in educational visits with policy-makers, press events, etc. This is critical as March 2009 is approaching fast for SCHIP reauthorization and we need your assistance to help educate decision-makers and our communities about the benefits of the health coverage programs.

### ***Southern Regional Meeting: Bulletin Report***

#### TEAMWORK DESTINED FOR SUCCESS

**Agenda for Children** sponsored the *National Covering Kids and Families Network's Southern Regional Convening "Teamwork Destined for Success"* on September 30th and October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. The convening was an opportunity to network with Southern states and dialogue on common policy issues and barriers to children's healthcare coverage the region is facing. There were multiple conference sessions, educating NCKF Network members, as well as prospective members on Network priorities including SCHIP Reauthorization. Other sessions addressed outreach and enrollment issues including state coordination on children's enrollment, bridging the enrollment process with technology, faith based outreach, as well as Louisiana's Outreach Blitz Model. The convening also addressed capacity building including continuing the CKF model locally, coalition building, and membership recruitment for the Network. A highlight for many was the Round Table Discussion on the State of Kids Coverage in the South. The NCKF Network would like to once again thank *Agenda for Children*, *Louisiana Department of Health & Hospitals*, and the *Louisiana Covering Kids and Families Coalition* for all their hard work on this successful event.

**MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: COLORADO & WISCONSIN**

**Colorado 2010 All Kids Covered Initiative** The Colorado 2010 All Kids Covered Initiative is a statewide partnership of over 50 active organizations dedicated to the goal that by the year 2010, all children in Colorado will have health care coverage that ensures access to a medical home providing appropriate and affordable health services.

The strength and focus of 2010 All Kids Covered Initiative is legislative and administrative change to ensure all kids have health insurance coverage, access and appropriate benefits. In our first year of legislative work, 2007, the 2010 Initiative successfully advocated for a statutory definition of “medical home” and directed to the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) to increase the number of Medicaid and CHP+ children with a medical home; presumptive eligibility for children applying for Medicaid or CHP+; a requirement for an annual report from HCPF on quality, access, and health outcomes; continuous enrollment for CHP+ kids moving to Medicaid; clarification of necessary identity documentation required for CHP+ applicants, decreasing this barrier; and creation of a state-appointed advisory committee to work with HCPF to develop and implement a plan to cover all children by 2010.

During the 2008 legislative session 2010 All Kids Covered championed two pieces of legislation that, in all, accomplished the following: successfully expanding health insurance coverage for uninsured children through the Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+) program by increasing eligibility from 205% of the Federal Poverty Level to 225%; making the Child Health Plan’s mental health benefits package equal to Medicaid mental health benefits for children; reducing barriers to enrollment in Medicaid and CHP+ by eliminating the requirements for families to submit paycheck stubs, instead allowing the state to verify a family’s income using data that is already available; and determining the feasibility of combining Colorado’s Medicaid and CHP+ programs.

The focus of our work for the 2009 legislative session is close monitoring of the implementation of bills past to date and support for eligibility modernization efforts underway in Colorado.

To find out more about 2010 All Kids Covered contact:

Stacey Moody with Colorado Covering Kids and Families ([stacey@cchn.org](mailto:stacey@cchn.org))

Tara Trujillo with The Colorado Children’s Campaign ([tara@coloradokids.org](mailto:tara@coloradokids.org))

**Covering Kids & Families — Wisconsin** Back to school is a busy time for children and families. Covering Kids & Families-WI (CKF-WI) along with local school and health officials encouraged parents with uninsured kids in Madison, Wisconsin to take a moment and explore options for high-quality, affordable health care.

An estimated 98,000 children in Wisconsin were without insurance for at least part of the year in 2006. Since February 1, virtually all children in Wisconsin are eligible for BadgerCare Plus, a comprehensive health care program for Wisconsin families that covers eye exams, immunizations, sports physicals, speech therapy, doctor and hospital visits, prescriptions and more. This year, during the Back to School Campaign, CKF-WI, the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD), and the South Madison Health and Family Center-Harambee teamed up to identify uninsured children in Madison schools and help them get health care coverage.

*(continued on Page 3)*

**MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: (CON'T FROM PAGE 3)**

To kick off this effort, a wide range of community partners were available on August 21 to answer questions about BadgerCare Plus and enroll eligible families at 16 schools during school registration. Parents had an opportunity to do a quick 10-minute screening to see if their family is eligible for BadgerCare Plus. Parents were also able to enroll their children/family in BadgerCare Plus. Outreach specialists helped walk families through the screenings and applications using the website [access.wi.gov](http://access.wi.gov). Highlights included:

- **51** Families were determined eligible for BadgerCare Plus
- **62** Families needed follow-up either to complete a full application or had questions that need answers
- **14** BadgerCare Plus applications were completed

Additional Data collected during the 2007-2008 school year:

- **5,743** Children were enrolled in the 17 Madison schools where outreach was provided on August 21.
- **467** Children are estimated uninsured from the 17 schools. About 84% of MMSD families provided information about health insurance in 2007. The count of uninsured students includes only those who completed forms. Since uninsured families are less likely to complete the form, the number of uninsured students listed is probably lower than the actual number.

The Madison School District is one of 14 across Wisconsin working with CKF-WI to reach students in need of health coverage. The project seeks to create an efficient, effective, and sustainable way to connect children to health coverage by partnering with Wisconsin's schools, county agencies and local organizations.

For more information about CKF-WI, please contact: Jeni Appleby at [jlbingen@wisc.edu](mailto:jlbingen@wisc.edu) or visit: [www.ckfwi.org](http://www.ckfwi.org)

**NATIONAL NEWS: (CON'T FROM PAGE 1)**

From the states' efforts in the retention initiative, promising strategies are emerging to improve the retention of eligible children and adults in Medicaid and SCHIP. Other states can adopt these promising strategies with effective leadership and adequate resources. Some of the promising practices include:

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| • Auto referral transition between Medicaid and SCHIP   | • Improving communications – written and phone messages |
| • Centralizing the renewal process for Medicaid-only    | • Using technology to update client contact information |
| • System assigned workflow vs. individual caseloads     | • Electronic processes and filing systems               |
| • Administrative reviews, i.e., ex parte                | • Extending the auto-closure time period                |
| • Pre-populated renewal forms                           | • Convenient submission of cost-sharing fee             |
| • Multiple renewal options: mail, fax, phone and online | • Auto-dialer reminders                                 |
|   | • Utilizing Managed Care Organizations                  |

Policies and procedures that focus on retention and minimize churning help protect families, enhance the continuity and effectiveness of health care and improve the efficiency of the management of public health care programs. Improving retention of eligible enrollees in public health coverage programs profits children and adults, caseworkers and eligibility determination agencies and communities and states.

For additional information about the Retention Initiative, promising strategies and retention resources please go to [www.thesoutherninstitute.org](http://www.thesoutherninstitute.org) or contact Judi Cramer at [jcramer@thesoutherninstitute.org](mailto:jcramer@thesoutherninstitute.org).