

August/September
2010

covering kids & families (CKF)

A statewide coalition dedicated to reducing health disparities and improving overall health in Wisconsin by cultivating a network of informed individuals and organizations, thereby enhancing capacity to maximize participation in public health insurance programs.

CKF is housed at the UW-Madison School of Human Ecology, working in partnership with UW-Extension and other partners throughout the state.

Middleton Building
Third Floor
1305 Linden Drive
Madison WI 53706-1524

Phone: 608-261-1455
Fax: 608-265-6048
E-mail: info@ckfwi.org

www.ckfwi.org



The BadgerCare+ Toolbox-- what schools are talking about

Covering kids & families' BadgerCare+ Toolbox for schools and communities received national exposure last month, showing once again that we are recognized as the go-to source for building connections in communities to reach the uninsured and enroll them in public health programs.



www.ckfwi.org

CKF Project Coordinator Michael Jacob was among three panelists in a national webinar hosted by the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS). Roughly 250 participants tuned in from across the country to hear the lessons we have learned pilot-testing outreach in 16 diverse school districts in Wisconsin, and to get introduced to our online Toolbox.

The webinar generated significant traffic to the CKF web site before, during and after the presentation. People from 18 states and the District of Columbia have visited the CKF web site recently, with most of their time spent perusing the many materials, tips and other resources available though the Toolbox. And the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in New Hampshire is using CKF's form for collecting health insurance status information in the state's largest school district, Manchester.

School district and community organization staff throughout Wisconsin have also been spending a lot of time with the Toolbox in recent weeks as kids head back to school. Wisconsin-based visits to CKF's web site have come from Aniwa to Wisconsin Rapids, from Beloit to Superior, from Appleton to La Crosse and everywhere in-between.

As we had hoped, the Toolbox is proving to be a **one-stop source for schools**, community organizations, and state and local agencies to find the things they need to help those who are lacking health insurance in their communities. As noted on page two, the resources are designed to meet the demands of districts and communities big and small, urban and rural. Whether it is learning the basics of BadgerCare+, providing outreach, or actually enrolling kids and families, there is something for everyone.

Using the BadgerCare+ Toolbox

Thanks to the collaboration between 16 diverse pilot school districts and *covering kids & families*, BadgerCare+ resources have been assembled in one place--the BadgerCare+ Toolbox--to help better connect uninsured families to public health insurance. Find the toolbox at www.ckfwi.org/toolbox.html to choose downloadable materials, including some that are available in Spanish and English.



"No child should have to skip a doctor's appointment or go without the medicine they need because their family can't pay," Sebelius said, challenging state and local officials to "find and enroll those five million kids."

-- Jon Peacock

Armed with New Data, Sebelius Renews Connecting Kids to Coverage Challenge

by Jon Peacock

Wisconsin Council on Children and Families



Jon Peacock

A new study released in early September by the Urban Institute Health Policy Center estimates that there were 7.3 million uninsured children in the U.S. on an average day in 2008, and five million of them (65%) were eligible for Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) but were not enrolled in either plan.

The study was published on September 3rd in the journal "Health Affairs" and was highlighted at an event in Washington D.C. featuring DHSS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, who renewed a challenge to political leaders and others to get all of the country's eligible uninsured children into coverage over the next five years.

"No child should have to skip a doctor's appointment or go without the medicine they need because their family can't pay," Sebelius said, challenging state and local officials to "find and enroll those five million kids." The Secretary unveiled a list of influential leaders and national organizations who have accepted the "Connecting Kids to Coverage Challenge" and will strive to improve outreach, enrollment and retention of children, until all eligible children are enrolled in health insurance programs.

According to the Urban Institute's findings, 81.8 percent of American children eligible for Medicaid or CHIP were enrolled in 2008. Wisconsin was well above average, at 86.8 percent, but still trailed 11 other states and the District of Columbia. (I suspect Wisconsin will move up in those rankings once comparable data is available for 2009, showing the effects of longer implementation of BadgerCare Plus.)

The improvements made by BadgerCare Plus have formed a solid foundation that our state leaders can build upon as they move forward to make the promise of the Affordable Care Act a reality for all residents of our state. In the meantime, we can prevent children from slipping through the cracks by reaching all eligible children so they get the care they need to do well in school and be successful in life. You can learn more about the Challenge and steps for improving coverage on the InsureKidsNow website.

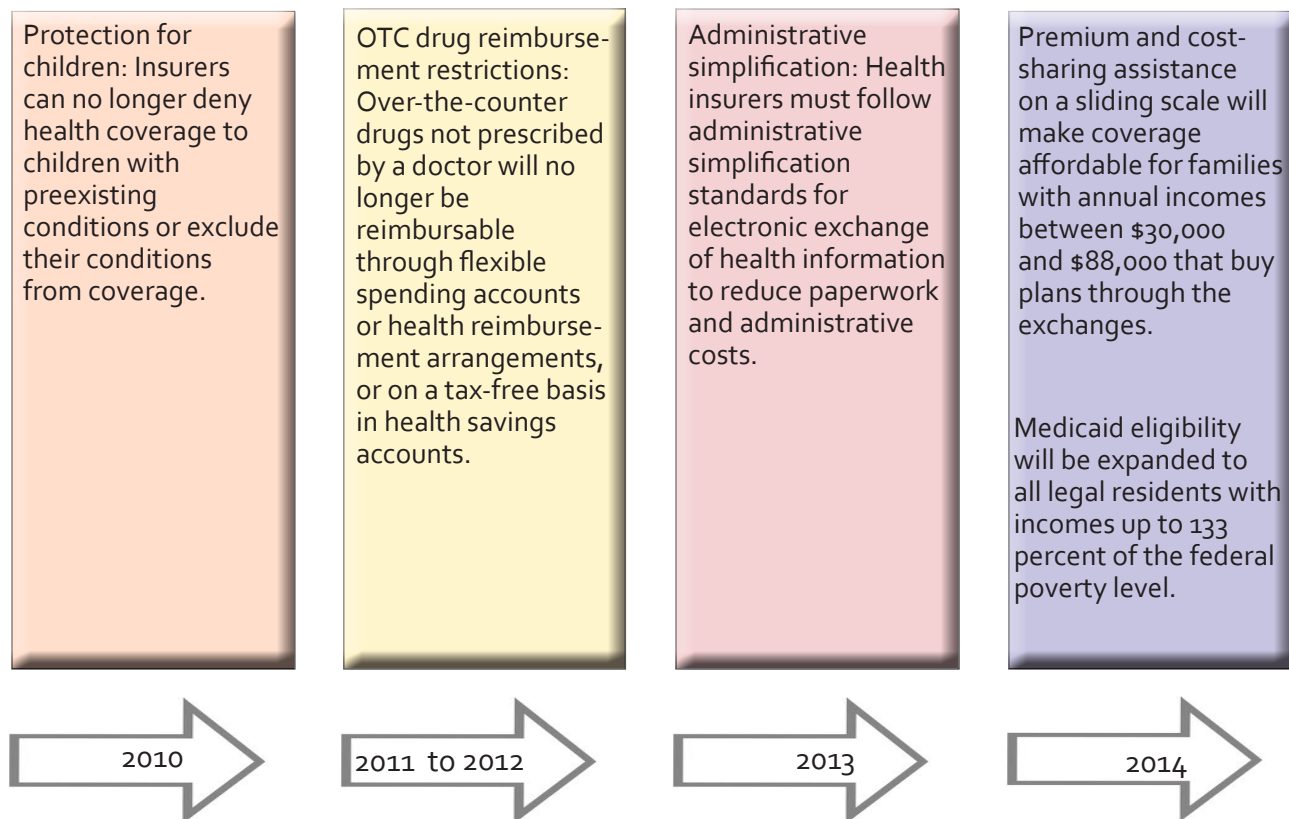
One way that Wisconsin is stepping up to the Connecting Kids to Coverage Challenge is by participating in a new program called Get Covered, Get in the Game (GCGG) which uses a sports focus to reach out to and enroll eligible children. The Department of Health Services announced at an August 19th news conference in Milwaukee that Wisconsin will be one of seven states piloting this initiative.

According to a *Journal Sentinel* article: "The campaign will recruit athletic coaches at 20 high schools around Wisconsin, as well as community groups such as the Boys and Girls Clubs, youth soccer, and the United Way, to get the word out to families eligible for state or federal health insurance programs."

Health Reform in the Next Four Years

Below are a few highlights of Commonwealth Fund's health reform timeline and the ways in which **covering kids & families** expects to continue its efforts.

What Commonwealth Fund's Health Reform Looks Like Over the Next 4 Years



How **covering kids & families** (BadgerCare+) Will Respond to Reform

- **Covering kids & families** continues to expand partnerships with Wisconsin school districts to identify uninsured families and assist them with enrollment in BadgerCare+.
- A new governor and legislature take office in January 2011. **Covering kids & families** monitors health-care policy and provides updated materials to schools who assist families who need insurance.
- **Covering kids & families** analyzes health care reform in Wisconsin as it really starts to take shape and evaluates how any gains or gaps in eligibility and services affect families.
- The BadgerCare+ Toolbox resources reflect the most current state of public health care plans in Wisconsin, assuring that schools and partners can refresh their knowledge and train new staff with online training materials.

Visit: <http://www.commonwealthfund.org/Content/Publications/Other/2010/Timeline-for-Health-Care-Reform-Implementation.aspx#2011> and www.ckfwi.org to learn greater detail about the timelines from Commonwealth Fund and **covering kids & families**.

“We hear a lot of rhetoric about budget issues and about avoiding the mistakes of the past, but not much in the way of specific proposals about how the next budget will be balanced.”

-- Jon Peacock

Will Candidates Tell Us How They Will Close the State’s Budget Deficit?

by Jon Peacock

Wisconsin Council on Children and Families

Wisconsin is facing very severe budget challenges, which are partially related to and will no doubt affect the state’s financing of Medicaid and BadgerCare Plus. These fiscal challenges should be the subject of thoughtful analysis by candidates for Governor and the Legislature, but thus far that has not been the case. We hear a lot of rhetoric about budget issues and about avoiding the mistakes of the past, but not much in the way of specific proposals about how the next budget will be balanced.



One of the most pressing problems is that the state has a deficit in current funding for Medicaid and BadgerCare Plus (BC+). The state share of that shortfall was estimated in March of this year to be \$273 million (in General Purpose Revenue, or GPR). Fortunately, Congress finally approved a bill last month that will extend federal fiscal relief for Medicaid until the end of this fiscal year, which is expected to reduce Wisconsin’s Medicaid/BC+ deficit by \$194 million.

In a recent memo, the Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) said the extended federal aid, coupled with under-spending in the SeniorCare program, will reduce the state’s Medicaid/BC+ deficit to \$58 million GPR. The LFB cautioned, however, that the Department of Health Services will soon be releasing new figures, and I won’t be surprised if those estimates significantly increase the size of the Medicaid and BC+ shortfall. DHS is currently considering options for trimming Medicaid spending (“rate reform 2.0”), but it’s unclear whether the state can save much during the current fiscal year through further adjustments to Medicaid rates.

Another part of the state’s fiscal challenges stems from the recent ruling of the state Supreme Court, which struck down the transfer of \$200 million in the 2007-09 budget from the medical malpractice fund into the funding for Medicaid. The Court ordered that to be paid back, with interest, to the malpractice fund. However, the timetable for the repayment hasn’t been settled, so it’s unclear when that will become part of the red ink on the state’s books.

Looking ahead to the next biennial budget, the picture gets considerably worse. According to August calculations by the LFB, the state’s structural imbalance is about \$2.5 billion GPR. That figure represents the amount of General Fund revenue growth the state would need in 2011-13 simply to provide flat funding for all of its current programs. However, several variables that the LFB hasn’t yet accounted for in its calculations are likely to push the structural imbalance to nearly \$3 billion, and perhaps higher. That would require revenue growth of roughly 7.5 percent per year, merely to freeze current spending levels.

Advocacy groups like Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF) will continue next session to push for a balanced approach to balancing the 2011-13 budget, including revenue uppers as well as cuts. Our hope is that legislators and the next governor will decide, once they face up to what an “all cuts” solution would look like, that slashing programs like Medicaid and BadgerCare Plus isn’t the way to go. That remains to be seen, but in the meantime please ask candidates whether they will only entertain budget cuts or whether they are willing to put all options on the table as lawmakers debate how to balance the next budget bill.

covering kids & families
University of Wisconsin-Madison

1305 Linden Drive, Third Floor
Madison WI 53706
608-261-1455

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Save the Date

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Tuesday, October 12, 2010

Annual Fall Conference

9:00am to 3:30pm

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Arboretum, Visitor Center
Madison WI

A light breakfast and lunch will be provided.

The conference is free to everyone.

Please **register on-line** and find more details at

www.ckfwi.org

For more info:
Mary Unmuth
mjunmuth@wisc.edu
608-261-1455