



covering kids & families

Issue IX

Wisconsin

September 2005

The

Covering Kids and Families -

Wisconsin 2005 Back to School Campaign was our biggest and best yet – no small feat given the success of the campaign since it began in 2003.

As you almost certainly know, Back to School time is a perfect opportunity to get parents thinking about health care for themselves and their schoolchildren. Schools already do an excellent job of promoting and enrolling families in the Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) program. Since the income limits for FRPL are the same as for BadgerCare, it's a natural moment to make sure families recognize the importance of being healthy in order to do well in school.

This year, thanks to dozens of CKF-WI members and partners and others interested in getting people the health care they are eligible for, Wisconsin was home to 131 separate outreach, media and enrollment events in 60 of Wisconsin's 72 counties. We distributed 37,000 bookmarks for kids, 12,000 flyers for parents, 400 posters and 3,100 stickers, all urging parents to call 877-KIDS-NOW to explore BadgerCare as an option for their family.

In Dane County, Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin (D-02) joined Madison School Board Member Johnny Winston, Jr. and the Quinn family to talk about the benefits of BadgerCare and the importance of health care for the future of our children and our economy. Our La Crosse Coalition again garnered significant media attention for its massive backpack campaign, partnering with numerous La Crosse businesses and community organizations. Our Milwaukee lead agencies again hosted a very successful back to school health fair attracting thousands of families. Finally, local health and human service departments, UW-

Extension county-based faculty, and other community based organizations worked from a CKF-WI template to release localized information about the campaign to media outlets in 57 different counties.

Our efforts kept the national communications office busy sending us the free supplies and the coverage we received was so impressive it made the "Sizzle Reel" shown at CKF's national conference in Washington D.C. We can all be proud that we have such an engaged, dedicate, talented Coalition. Thanks to everyone!



The Covering Kids and Families-Wisconsin & HealthWatch Wisconsin Joint Statewide Fall Meeting

Wednesday, October 26, 9:00 am–2:00 pm
Country Spring Hotel, Waukesha

The State Budget & Other Major Policies Affecting Medicaid

Health Watch Wisconsin

- o Results of the planning initiative
- o Next steps

ACCESS.WISCONSIN.GOV update and demonstration

Update on Oral Health Access

Workshop sessions on:

- o Placing health benefits counselors
- o Mental health crisis intervention
- o Working with the faith community

Registration fee of \$10 includes the program, materials, breakfast and lunch. Go to www.ckfwi.org for registration and lodging information.



U.S. Rep. Tammy Baldwin stresses the importance of BadgerCare to students and families today at Madison's James Wright Middle School as BadgerCare recipients Alexis Quinn and her mother Erin Quinn listen.



Cost-Sharing: The Number of Uninsured Grows as Healthcare Becomes Less Affordable

The National Governor's Association (NGA) has proposed several changes to the Medicaid Program. One of the proposed changes allows states to require individuals to share in Medicaid costs through co-pays, deductibles, and premiums not to exceed 5% of a household's income. The Federal Commission on Medicaid Reform has also proposed allowing states to establish tiered co-payments for prescription drugs.

Congress is using these proposals as guides for Medicaid reform. The theory behind such proposals is that they promote personal responsibility and will result in more careful, efficient use of medical services.

However, the result may well be a decrease in the utilization of essential healthcare services, including preventive care services, which save money for the healthcare system and result in improved overall health over time. Numerous groups have studied the effects of cost-sharing proposals, including PICO, a national network of faith-based community organizations, which released a study this month predicting between 500,000 and 1.5 million children would lose health insurance coverage under the NGA proposal. The National Women's Law Center also responded to the NGA proposal, saying cost-sharing makes health care services unaffordable for most Medicaid recipients. The costs are often redistributed to other healthcare providers as individuals avoid co-payments by using hospital Emergency rooms, which are a more costly healthcare intervention. A Center on Budget and Policy Priorities report from July further explains that cost-sharing leads to poorer health of low-income individuals. Additionally, Minnesota did a pilot study on a portion of its Medicaid population using cost-sharing measures. The study found that when the generic prescription co-payment was increased from \$1 to \$3, more than half the Medicaid patients were unable to afford the drug and postponed treatment or used more costly healthcare services such as emergency rooms.

Cost-sharing is not a promising solution for reducing the costs of Medicaid. As premiums and other payments required of the insured keep climbing, the percentage of the population that is uninsured is rising as well. In part due to unaffordable cost-sharing practices, the cost of healthcare remains a significant issue for both the lowest-income individuals on Medicaid and those employers and insured individuals left with ever-increasing premiums.



Policymakers want to get people to limit their use of health care, but is less really better?

Who are the Uninsured?

Close your eyes and create a mental image of a "typical" uninsured child. Think about his or her race; do his or her parent's work, does the child live with both parents?

A Federal Study published in the New England Journal of Medicine last month analyzed the demographics of both uninsured children and children with only intermittent insurance. According to the study, 46% of children without any insurance are Hispanic and 58% of children with insurance only part of the year are white. Over 60% of children with a gap in their insurance coverage live with both parents who work outside of the home.

How do these facts stack up against the typical image of the uninsured? For a reminder of why fully funded government-sponsored health programs are so important, see the article on cost-sharing.



Co-Chair Corner: CKF-WI Steering Committee Elections

By: Kathy Kaelin & Andy Heidt, CKF-WI co-chairs



The Steering Committee for Covering Kids and Families - Wisconsin has four elected positions that play vital leadership roles for the coalition: two at-large seats and two co-chairs. The co-chairs serve two-year terms and are up for election on a rotating basis. The co-chair seat currently held by Kathy Kaelin is up for election this fall. Also up for election at this time are the two at-large seats, currently held by Jennifer Winter and Jennifer Tarrantino.

If you are interested in running for any of these positions, or want more information about the role of the Steering Committee, let CKF-WI's project director, Roberta Riportella, know by calling 608-263-7088 or by e-mailing riporte@wisc.edu no later than Friday, October 7.

If you have questions about any of these seats, the Coalition, or what it is like to serve on it's Steering Committee, you can contact either of us at KKaelin@Automated-Health.com or heidt@co.dane.wi.us.