



UTAH HEALTH POLICY PROJECT

HEALTH MATTERS

Health Matters E-Newsletter

June 6, 2008

Greetings Health Advocates!

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1. **MCAC Medicaid Budget Hearing, June 19, 2008 4-6pm, Thursday, at the Cannon Health Building (288 N 1460 W), Room 125.**

The Department of Health's Medical Care Advisory Committee (MCAC) is holding its annual public hearing to receive public input on Medicaid and PCN budget requests. The MCAC provides advice on policy development and program administration regarding Utah's Medicaid programs.

This is the time for the community to provide input to the Department (via the MCAC) on its budget priorities for 2009. This input is then considered alongside input from other divisions and final recommendations are then sent along to the Governor. The process culminates in the release of the Governor's budget recommendations—usually on the 1st Friday in December. These recommendations are then represented by the Executive Branch as the Legislature prepares its budget for the next fiscal year.

If you have programs you would like see funded, please come and testify. It is a good idea to arrive early so that you can testify towards the beginning.

Given the momentum for health system reforms and growing interest in affordable coverage for working families, we are asking the community to urge MCAC members to support a modest section 1931 expansion of Medicaid for working parents as a top priority and critical first step in the reform process. Here are few talking points:

- For coverage to be truly affordable, a prerequisite for participation, Utah will need a significant influx of federal dollars. This can be achieved through current programs like Medicaid and CHIP that receive generous federal matching funds.

- Given Utah’s generous 3-to-1 match rate, there is no better way to capture these critical resources. To manage the cost, the benefit package for the newly eligible parents can be scaled back to CHIP levels.
- Massachusetts raised eligibility for its parents to 300% of the poverty level—yet many (20%) still cannot afford to fulfill the state’s individual mandate. By contrast, Utah advocates are only asking to raise parents’ Medicaid eligibility from 50% of poverty to 100% of poverty.
- Low-income working parents earning less \$8,800 for a family of 3 (50% of the poverty level) are either not offered coverage at all or they are asked to pay an unreasonable portion of the premium. Yet, in order to stay (or get) on the path to self sufficiency these families must have access to decent, affordable coverage. The best way, if not the only way, to bring them into the system, is through Medicaid.
- Most other eligibility groups are covered by Medicaid up to 100% of the poverty level. Thus, for the sake of consistency (and fairness), parents should also be eligible at 100% FPL.

Uninsured Utahns by Income Level

Poverty Level:	0-100%	101-150%	151-200%
Children (0-18)	22,000	31,000	13,000
Adults (19-64) with children	42,000	46,000	20,000
Adults (19-64) without children	8,000	11,000	9,000

Source: Utah Health Status Survey, 2006

The cost of such an expansion would be around \$26 million in state funds.

For more talking points, click [here](#).

2. Health Reform Taskforce, Looking for Solutions

The Health Reform Task Force met a few weeks ago. After testimony that was not solution-oriented Rep. Dave Clark told the public that he is not interested in hearing “we can’t do that because...” rather he wants everyone to focus on “we can do this if...”

One of the top agenda items was health insurance transparency. With the goal of reform moving Utah towards a more consumer-driven market, the Legislature and stakeholders feel that consumers must know what they are buying. Currently the health insurance industry is fairly opaque in its operations, leaving the consumer in the dark about what they are actually purchasing. A draft bill ([Health Insurance Benefit and Pricing Data](#)), to shed light on the insurance industry, allowing consumers to be better purchasers, was discussed at length.

Also presented at the meeting was a proposed online tool that will be created and launched by the executive branch. This tool was compared to Travelocity.com, the first on-line travel website that allows consumers to research destinations and shop for travel reservations. Similar to Travelocity.com, the proposed website will allow consumers to

research, shop for, and compare health insurance plans. For more information on the Travelocity comparison [click here](#), and to see a powerpoint on what is being proposed [click here](#).

The next Task Force meeting will be on Thursday, June 19. The agenda has not yet been posted, but you can monitor the Task Force and find the agenda by [clicking here](#).

3. Recap of May's HHS Interim Committee

The committee received a report on efforts to reduce the DSPD waiting list. Department of Human Services Executive Director Lisa-Michele Church reiterated her desire to address the needs of those at the top of the list as well as those towards the middle. The Committee expressed its support for this general approach, but appeared unsure about making the one-time money for respite care permanent.

The committee also received a report on the Utah Autism Initiative, which has nearly finished its preliminary work and will be returning to the committee in September with recommendations. The committee then received testimony from a mother of an autistic child who has experienced first-hand the challenges in affording and accessing beneficial treatments. She expressed a desire to require all insurance companies to cover these treatments. Currently about half of states mandate such coverage.

4. Recap of May's Executive Appropriations Committee

The Legislature's Executive Appropriations Committee met a few weeks ago to discuss the 2007 General Session fiscal notes. The preferred drug list (PDL) was one of the items discussed at some length. UHPP has been instrumental in the development and passage of the PDL, and in making the case to reinvest the savings in the Medicaid program. Due to delayed implementation and some changes to the language of the bill, the PDL has not yet realized the level of expected savings. Several committee members asked for qualitative data on outcomes for Medicaid enrollees. UHPP continues to be a strong supporter of the PDL and will continue in our work to strengthen the program and ensure that all savings are reinvested in the state's bare-bones Medicaid program.

5. Looking ahead to June 18th Interim Day: Health Disparities and Reinsurance

Health and Human Services Interim Committee (2pm-4pm, room C250)

HHS will take up the topic of health disparities and pediatric mental health services. The full agenda can be found by clicking [here](#).

The health disparities section of the meeting will look at health care access, treatment, and outcomes and how they vary significantly across population subgroups. In 2004 the Legislature created the Center for Multicultural Health within the Department of Health to promote and coordinate research, data production, and education on issues related to racial and ethnic minorities and other population subgroups. The Committee will review the significance of health disparities in Utah and what the Center for Multicultural Health and others are doing to address them. The Utah Multicultural Health Network and

UHPP will be presenting on promising practices in efforts to address disparities at the state, Federal, and community level.

Business and Labor Committee (2pm-4pm, room W025)

Business and Labor will take up the issue of reinsurance in the health insurance sector as a risk management tool. The agenda can be found [here](#).

You can read UHPP's fact sheet about how reinsurance can help stabilize the private insurance market and stimulate competition by [clicking here](#). UHPP has been invited to present on this topic to the committee.

6. Draft of New Medicaid Waiver to Expand UPP

In response to HB133 Health System Reform legislation, the Department of Health released a working draft of the new HIFA 1115 waiver to implement changes in Utah's Premium Partnership (UPP) and CHIP programs. The intent of the waiver is:

- to increase the number of slots in the program to serve 5000 adults and 1000 children;
- to allow individuals to purchase individual rather than just employer sponsored insurance, and
- to restrict families' ability to enroll in CHIP if the parent qualifies for UPP.

You can read the working draft of the waiver [here](#).

According to the Department, the waiver is still not complete and not ready for public feedback. The Department has committed to a public hearing, but that is still to be arranged. Stay tuned for further announcements and UHPP's feedback on the initial waiver draft.

7. UMPP Update

The Utah Medicaid Policy Partnership is meeting on **June 12 from 12:30 to 2:00pm at AUCH (860 East 4500 South, Suite 206)**. This month we will be building off our recently completed retreat and taking a closer look at the medical home concept.

We will first look at what other states are doing to implement medical homes within their state Medicaid programs. Then we will learn more about the medical home project currently underway in Utah for children with special health care needs and similar. You can read more about the medical home concept in UHPP's fact sheet, [Medical Home: Improving Quality While Containing Cost](#), by clicking [here](#).

For more information and to RSVP please contact Lincoln at lincoln@healthpolicyproject.org or (801) 433-2299.

8. UHPP Community Survey: Key Findings and Final Prize Drawings

A big thanks to all 758 of you for taking the time to complete our survey! We will be working over the next few weeks with our Board to integrate your meaningful feedback. The results will be used to tune our services and to help you bring your voices and expertise into the health system reform process. Some have asked to see the results: click here for the [Key Findings of UHPP Community Survey](#) report.

Congratulations to the winners of the final prize drawings: Kathryn Rowley (Department of Health), Summer Cox, and Earl Wunderli. The prizes will be mailed to you next week.

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