



CHILD HEALTH UPDATE

BRIGHT FUTURES AND MANAGED CARE

December 1998, No. 3

Bright Futures and Managed Care Forum Series

Lack of health insurance and access to care are two major reasons children fail to receive health care appropriate to their needs. To provide an opportunity for public agencies, community organizations and private sector health plans to share outreach strategies and approaches that have been found to work with low-income families, NIHCM sponsored a forum, "Outreach: Private and Public Sector Efforts That Work," on March 31, 1998, in Washington, D.C.

At the Forum, more than 90 participants representing key stakeholders—federal, state and local officials, child health experts, and managed care executives—heard practitioners from states and the private sector present and discuss innovative, practical outreach initiatives that work both to enroll children for coverage (under Medicaid or CHIP) and to get them receiving care in a medical home.

Jack Ebeler, NIHCM Foundation Board Member and former Acting Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services who helped to develop the Administration's child health initiative (SCHIP), explained the objectives of the child health plan. The plan has two goals: First, find, enroll and serve those uninsured children below the federal poverty level who are already eligible for Medicaid. And, second, expand coverage to children at somewhat higher income levels.

Because it is an incremental, targeted reform, the child health initiative may not satisfy everyone's policy preferences. But, as **Mr. Ebeler** noted, once the legislative decisions are made, we must come together to implement the resulting programs. "The key is to switch into the implementation phase: to find and enroll these kids and then provide them care and service."

In February, President Clinton announced a series of efforts to enroll children in health coverage. **Doris Barnette**, Principal Advisor to HRSA Administrator Dr. Earl Fox, presented an overview of the President's Outreach Initiative. The White House developed a federal interagency task force, and the President directed eight agencies to develop plans for how they will address outreach and the child health insurance program. Getting them all involved in helping to find CHIP- and Medicaid-eligible kids is critical to [CHIP's] success, in **Ms. Barnette's** view. "We have to go where the children are." (*Continued on reverse*)

Bright Futures Update

To promote preventive care for children, the Bright Futures project began with the development and publication of the comprehensive *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents*. The comprehensive guidelines are now being updated and the second edition should be available in a few months.

The most recent materials to be distributed by the Bright Futures project are two health supervision encounter forms, one for providers and one for families. The encounter forms present an outline of recommendations for care found in the *Bright Futures* materials, including anticipatory guidance.

An Activity Book is available for families containing 14 activities to teach young children about health and safety. *Bright Futures in Practice: Oral Health* is available to educate families and health professionals on the essentials of implementing and maintaining good oral health. It can also be used as a training tool on prevention strategies.

The *Bright Futures* Web site (www.brightfutures.org) provides detailed information, downloadable materials and links, including links for parents to share information.

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—*Jack Ebeler*

"We have to go where the children are."

—*Doris Barnette*

For detailed information about Bright Futures, see the following Web sites:

www.brightfutures.org

www.ncemch.org

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— *Barbara Berger*

"It's really the continual contact that you have with these families and with these children that [is] going to make the difference in whether your efforts are successful."

— *Melissa Tobler*

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March Forum (cont'd)

Health plan managers, state and local officials, and private foundation executives discussed private and public sector efforts to overcome the barriers to enrolling children for coverage and access to care such as: lack of knowledge that coverage is available, particularly for former cash-assistance families who remain eligible for Medicaid; a complicated and time-consuming application process; reluctance to enroll because of stigma and mistrust of an entitlement system; lack of providers and care centers; restrictive locations for care and hours of operation; cultural diversity and insufficient social support.

States like Rhode Island are redesigning their public programs to meet the needs of beneficiaries and increase provider participation. Private sector foundations such as the Jewish Healthcare Foundation of Pittsburgh and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's *Covering Kids* program are teaming up with numerous other community groups and local agencies to enroll children for coverage.

Barbara Berger, Executive Director of the Ohio Caring Foundation, stressed the importance of listening to families to learn the best ways to reach them. "Do your homework, [do your] market research. Don't presume that we know how these families will react or what they want to see or feel."

Following the discussion on increasing enrollment, **John Monahan** and **Chris Champlin** (Medi-Cal Program of Blue Cross of California), **Melissa Tobler** (Meridian Managed Care, Wisconsin), and **Mona Jordan**, (Gateway Health Plan, Pittsburgh) joined state and local officials to highlight their efforts to ensure that enrollees access the care available to them.

Health plans have been successful at building support systems and educating parents and children about the importance of primary and preventive care using company outreach programs and disease and case management programs. Health plan outreach workers and member educators provide needed support to stress the importance of continuity of care. As **Melissa Tobler** noted, "it's really the continual contact that you have with these families and with these children that [is] going to make the

difference in whether your efforts are successful."

An *Action Brief* giving more details about the discussion at the forum has been distributed. Please call us for a copy or download it from NIHCM's Web site at: www.NIHCM.org.

Upcoming Forum: "Improving Quality of Care for Children"

NIHCM will hold a one-day, invitation-only forum, "Improving Quality of Care for Children," in Washington, D.C., on December 4, 1998. The meeting will provide an overview of the current state of health care quality for children and approaches to measuring health plan and provider performance as well as future initiatives. A panel discussion will address the role of Bright Futures in quality improvement. In addition, the importance of oral health will be addressed in a "Bright Futures and Oral Health" update.

Research Award

On November 12, 1998, NIHCM presented awards for excellence in health research dealing with families and children. The winners were Judith Lave, Christopher Keane, Chyongchiou Lin, Edmund Ricci, Gabriele Amersbach and Charles LaVallee, for their paper entitled, "Impact of a Children's Health Insurance Program on Newly Enrolled Children," published in *JAMA*, June 10, 1998; 279:1820-1825. The judges also awarded honorable mention to Anne Gadomski, Paul Jenkins and Melissa Nichols for their work entitled, "Impact of a Medicaid Primary Care Provider and Preventative Care on Pediatric Hospitalization," published in *Pediatrics*, March 1998. Next year's awards will cover articles published between September 1, 1998 and August 31, 1999.

Journalism Award

NIHCM is preparing for its Fifth Annual Health Care Journalism Award competition, which includes a prize for excellence in reporting on children's and family health care issues. Solicitations for articles published during 1998 will be mailed in early January. The awards will be presented in May, 1999. For more information please call Anne Mahoney at 202-296-4426, or visit our Web site at: www.NIHCM.org.