

Western Massachusetts

Health Access Network Notes



COMMUNITY PARTNERS, INC.

January 5, 2007

Jones Library – Amherst, MA

ISSUES & OBSERVATIONS:

A summary of new program information, observations, upcoming events, job & training opportunities shared by HAN members

Issues:

MassHealth – when outreach workers call MassHealth with a list of applicants they need to follow up for, MassHealth limits the number of questions they will answer. They are trying to be fair, but then outreach workers must call back again and again and wait on hold.

Community Partners Update: This spring the Virtual Gateway will add a screen that will make it possible for outreach workers with VG access who hold a client's Permission to Share Information form to see much of that person's information in the MA21 computer system in real time, which should substantially reduce the need for calls to the MassHealth Enrollment Center.

Issues raised relating to Commonwealth Care can be found in the Presentation section.

Program Information:

Medicare – Lorraine York-Edberg, Franklin/Hampshire SHINE

- The open enrollment period for Part D is over, but certain groups of people are eligible for “Special Enrollment Periods” (SEPs). Those who recently lost their Low-Income Subsidy (LIS) eligibility as a result of MassHealth re-determination have one additional enrollment period that lasts through March 2007. This is important because many health plans have raised their premiums and co-pays, and members may be able to save money by choosing another plan.
- Those whose health plans did not inform them of changes in costs and benefits in a timely manner are also entitled to additional time. For more information, contact SHINE at 1-800-243-4636 or 1-800-AGE-INFO.
- In October CMS notified some members that an extra amount would be withheld from their November Social Security checks to cover health and drug plan premiums CMS had previously failed to withhold. Anyone with a client in this situation **should contact**

Attorney Ali Bers of the Medicare Advocacy Project at Western Massachusetts Legal Services, (413) 781-7814 x 110, abers@wmls.org who is looking for plaintiffs for possible litigation of the issue.

- The Massachusetts law providing a one-time 30-day emergency supply of medications for dually eligible people and members of Prescription Advantage expired on December 31. 150 people a day were using the provision. Advocates are working for an extension. The 72-hour emergency dispensing will continue.

The Holyoke Health Center will be occupying its new building on Front St. in Chicopee in March. The facility includes 12 medical treatment rooms, a dental office and a pharmacy.

The Women's Health Network will be changing their model. Many of their current clients will be eligible for benefits under Commonwealth Care. The Network is starting work in the area of cardiovascular education.

Springfield Partners for a Healthier Community is working with BayState Health Systems financial counselors to staff two free clinics in the Springfield area. Financial counselors will take laptops to enroll patients in benefit programs. Funds for the project come from an EOHHS outreach mini-grant to Community Partners.

Resources:

From *Martina Carroll*, STAVROS – If you are looking for equipment to make medical visits more accessible for people with disabilities, call 413-256-0473 x213.