

## Western Massachusetts

# Health Access Network Notes



## COMMUNITY PARTNERS, INC.

December 1, 2006  
Jones Library – Amherst, MA

### STATE PROGRAM AND POLICY NEWS:

*Stacey Auger, Health Care For All and Meg Kroeplin, Community Partners*

#### Connector Board Meeting

- The Connector board meeting, held on November 20, raised questions about what plans should look like for everyone over 300% FPL. There was initial agreement on what the committee termed the “the 3 pillars of care” – physician visits, hospitalization and medications.
- However at the meeting, Julie Bowler, Commissioner, Division of Insurance suggested that plans should not compel people to purchase medications and suggested that the Connector should offer plans without medication options to reduce the costs.
- There was also discussion about a letter sent by the Chairs of the Health Care Finance Committee which indicated that the legislature was expecting to see Commonwealth Car plans for 300% FPL that were richer in benefits, providing full coverage.

#### 9c Cuts

- On November 10 (a holiday), Gov. Romney, claiming fiscal crisis, made cuts to the budget impacting all health and human services; these cuts are known as 9c cuts. The total amount cut was \$425 million, which took affect immediately.
- The Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center has done a great evaluation of these cuts, it can be found at [massbudget.org](http://massbudget.org).
- To help address the 9c cuts, a group has formed, Community for Public Responsibility (CPR). It is holding a rally on Wednesday Dec. 6 outside on the statehouse steps from 11-12.

#### Oral Health

- MassHealth has signed a contract with DELTA Dental to be the third-party administrator for MassHealth dental services, but this contract will be delayed until February.

#### Notice Simplification

- Mary Nolan, who visited the W. Mass HAN in Nov. and is an intern at Health Care For All continues to work on a notice simplification project. There will be an advisory meeting on Tues. Dec. 5 from 12:30-2 at HCFA. Mary is also trying to find a conference call option for

those who can't make it. Additionally, Mary is considering setting up a western Mass meeting.

### 2007 Legislative Session

- In January, the legislature will begin a new 2-year session. All new legislation to be considered needs to be filed. Stacey suggests that everyone should keep their eyes open for bills that are going to be submitted on a range of issues including requesting dental coverage for people on Commonwealth Care from 100-300% FPL.

### Children's Mental Health

- The Mass. Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the Boston Children's Hospital are about to launch a formal campaign on children's mental health. They are looking to pull together folks from all different corners to improve this system. MSPCC has the report on children's health in the commonwealth up on their website. Please click here to [learn more about the campaign](#).

### Questions

**Q:** If someone checks that they're disabled on the MH application, can they get Commonwealth Care while they're waiting for their disability determination?

**A:** Brian Rosman believes so and said he would look into it. Community Partners will check with him and see if he's gotten any new news...

**Q:** Can people get UCP while citizenship and I.D. is being verified?

**A:** Based on the conversation from the recent advocates meeting the answer is no for the time being. We have heard that this may be reviewed when Patrick comes into office. We've been told that all changes/possible changes to UCP policy are on hold until January.

**Q:** Is there any information on number of closings due to non-payment for those families converted to MH from CMSP?

**A:** Since July, 311 families have been closed because of non-payment but only three of these families came from the pool who were transferred from CMSP to MH. As an FYI, during FY06 876 children's cases were closed because of non-payment with 33% of these cases reopened within 30 days. Also, as of October 31<sup>st</sup>, 12,392 children have been enrolled in MassHealth in the 200-300% bracket. Of these, 9500 were converts from CMSP.