

## Western Massachusetts

# Health Access Network Notes

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COMMUNITY PARTNERS, INC.

May 4, 2007

Jones Library – Amherst, MA

### ISSUES & OBSERVATIONS:

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

#### Program Issues

##### Commonwealth Choice

The May 1 opening of Commonwealth Choice enrollment is making outreach workers and financial counselors even busier. Baystate Health Systems, which advertised the opening on TV, radio and in newspapers, had more than 100 people come in and ask about Commonwealth Choice the next day. (*Ana Martinez*)

##### Commonwealth Care

Providers, outreach workers and the public at large would find it extremely helpful if the Connector would create and distribute a list of services covered by MassHealth that Commonwealth Care plans do NOT cover.

Q. A client who has insurance without prescription drug coverage, has found getting his prescription drugs from Wal-Mart satisfactory. He wonders if he will have to pay for a prescription coverage plan when the health care reform mandate goes into effect [on July 1, 2007].

A. Insurance without Prescription Drug coverage will be considered “creditable” until 2008 or 2009. After that, drug coverage must be included. (*Meg Kroeplin, Community Partners*)

##### MassHealth

###### *Noticing*

Redundant, confusing, or conflicting communications from MassHealth continue to be a problem for outreach workers and their clients. Two examples:

- Clients are receiving letters requesting information which has already been submitted; the information is actually showing in REVS.

- The same client will receive two letters in the same day, one saying they have full Free Care, the other saying they have a \$5,000 deductible.

Some feel that the increased demands on the system made by the implementation of health care reform have contributed to the problem.

### *Citizenship and Identity*

- Verifying citizenship and identity remains a challenge, especially for the homeless. *Amy Pett* of Boston Healthcare for the Homeless has found the tool on the Community Partners web site with information on how to get an [out-of-state birth certificate](#) a great help.
- Many states require photo ID to get birth certificates, but it's hard to get a birth certificate without a photo ID. About 53% of Boston Healthcare for the Homeless applications have been stalled because of the DRA requirements.
- *Jackie Matta* of Hampshire HealthConnect (she created the tool on the CP web site) has found in similar situations that if you write a letter explaining the double-bind situation and the steps you have taken to solve the problem, the regional MEC may let it go through. A case manager or physician who has worked with the client for some time should write the letter.

### Medicare

After one year of the Part D program, getting people into plans is relatively easy; now problems are more complicated, like people being in more than one plan.

Resources:

- [2007 Part B preventive services](#) available through Medicare
- 2007 Medicare [co-pays and eligibility guidelines](#)

### RxAdvantage

RxAdvantage recently terminated potentially eligible members who did not provide proof that they had applied for the Low-Income Subsidy program. Those who wish to re-enroll should contact Prescription Advantage directly or their nearest SHINE office. Click here for [more details](#) . (<http://www.compartners.org/node/722>)

## **Program Information**

Berkshire AHEC will open an office in Northampton around June 1. They will provide all the services now available in Berkshire County, emphasizing cultural competency and health literacy. (*Carolyn Ford*)

As health care reform has provided more uninsured women with coverage, the number of women eligible for services offered by the Women's Health Network has declined. The program is still in place, but the number of sites will be reduced from 22 to 6, with only

one person in all of Western Massachusetts. Case management will be centralized in Boston. This change won't take place for three months. (*Danielle Carriveau*)

Community Health Program, Great Barrington Their long-awaited dental clinic will open in June; they are expecting to acquire an OB-GYN practice in the future. The laptop-equipped mobile outreach team has put information about where in the community they will be and when on the website at [http://communityhealthprograms.org/pg\\_hcap.php](http://communityhealthprograms.org/pg_hcap.php) (*Octavio Hernandez*)

PEEP-Food Stamp Project The University of Massachusetts Extension Nutrition Project will employ UMass student *Zoe Kantor* to work part-time doing client follow-up for Food Stamp applications initiated by *Cameron Carey, John Bergeron* and *Octavio Hernandez*, who agencies are participating in Community Partners' PEEP-Food Stamp project for 2007. Funding for the project comes from the US Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service; the goal is to increase awareness of and participation in the Food Stamp program. (*Lisa Sullivan-Werner*)

## Events

**“Medicare Part D: Successes and Continuing Challenges”** – Paper presentation and discussion sponsored by Massachusetts Health Policy Forum and Massachusetts Medical Policy Institute.

Wednesday, May 30 8:30 – 11:00 (breakfast included)

Radisson Hotel, Boston (Carver Salon)

People who work with people eligible for Part D in Western Massachusetts are encouraged to attend. For more information, email [mhpf@brandeis.edu](mailto:mhpf@brandeis.edu) or call Anna Svartz at 781/736-8479. Details can also be found on Community Partners' website at <http://www.compartners.org/events>