

Western Massachusetts

Health Access Network Notes



COMMUNITY PARTNERS, INC.

June 1, 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 Care

Relationship with the Insurance Partnership (IP)

For self-employed people the IP may offer more choices of insurance carriers while Commonwealth Care may offer lower prices. For the self-employed, moving from Commonwealth Care to the IP is easy; moving from the IP to Commonwealth Care is a challenge. To be eligible you must be uninsured, which means dropping your current insurance and going without until you have successfully applied for Commonwealth Care and received coverage, which could be a number of weeks.

In addition, as of July 1st the IP will no longer pay the employer portion of the subsidy to the self-employed, only the employee portion.

Currently, employees of businesses offering coverage through the IP must say that their insurance is subsidized (by the IP), which automatically makes them ineligible for Commonwealth Care. (For further information, contact *Simon Muil* of the Insurance Partnership at 413/896-0080.)

Problems updating member information

HAN participants noted that some clients are being terminated from Commonwealth Care because they have not returned a job update form, but they are receiving letters from MassHealth saying that they are being terminated because they haven't returned their Eligibility Review Form. Evidently the MassHealth computer system can't differentiate between the two forms. It is confusing for clients. Outreach workers have difficulty helping in the situation because the job update form is outside the scope of the Permission to Share Information (PSI) form. An ERD form is necessary to change information on a client's behalf.

Some outreach workers are concerned about potential liability as an ERD – for example, if a client loses coverage and incurs health care expenses. But *Pat Duma* of Advocacy for Access recommends using both forms so that you can be more useful to the client and so you and your client both receive the same information.

MassHealth

A number of outreach workers mentioned difficulties they are having with the overstressed MassHealth Enrollment Center (MEC):

- A recently unemployed client with children was denied MassHealth because he was receiving COBRA and the MEC worker mistakenly thought that meant he could not be eligible. Outreach workers suggested the following:
 - Ask to talk to a MEC supervisor.
 - Call the Third Party Liability section; they can be helpful. They will accept a letter from the former employer within 30 days.
 - Advocate for more state funding for MassHealth infrastructure so training can be improved.
 - Participate in the issue thread on Governor Patrick’s website under “Customer Service in government – http://devalpatrick.com/isearch.php?policy_flag=0&q=Customer+service+in+government
- Documents are faxed and re-faxed, but still seem to go missing. One solution is to put the client’s security number on every page, not just the fax cover sheet.

It was also noted that when everything works – you use the Virtual Gateway and get all your documents in on time – eligible clients can actually get MassHealth coverage in from 7-10 days.

Citizenship and identity documentation

- The Office of Medicaid has finished their identity match with the Registry of Motor Vehicles. But if a REVS check says “member not found,” you need to send in identity proof.
- If the only document missing from an eligible applicant’s MassHealth application is proof of citizenship and/or identity, they will be put into the Uncompensated Care Pool. (*Meg Kroeplin*)

Program Information

Together Rx is a program that offers discount prescriptions. They are looking for someone to train as a representative, to promote the program and distribute cards. If you know of anyone who would be interested, please contact *Nikki Riel* or *Sharleen Moffatt* at Franklin County Home Care, 413/773-5555.