

Western Massachusetts

Health Access Network Notes



COMMUNITY PARTNERS, INC.

July 6, 2007

Jones Library – Amherst, MA

ISSUES & OBSERVATIONS:

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

Program Issues

MassHealth

- Outreach workers' concerns about poor client service from the MEC have been reported to State Rep. Stephen Kulik, whose office will be gathering more information in the fall.
- A helpful new change: calls to the central MEC now are given reference numbers. Regional offices don't have that policy.

Commonwealth Care

- Outreach workers are receiving calls from clients who are ineligible for MassHealth and have been determined unable to afford Commonwealth Care. They are upset because though they won't be fined, they will still be without health insurance.
- Outreach programs are extremely busy. One office received over 900 telephone inquiries in the month of June. Employers wondering how they should respond to health care reform are also calling.
- A survey in progress in Chicopee has discovered that 50% of small businesses and temp agencies don't offer health insurance (some because they are tiny).

Insurance Partnership (IP)– Simon Muil

Two recent changes in the IP:

- People who have had health insurance from their employer for more than six months are not eligible for the IP. This has been the policy for a while; the change is that it is now being consistently enforced.
- Previously, self-employed members received a subsidy both as an employer and as an employee. The employer portion of the subsidy has now been discontinued, so the total subsidy amount is smaller.

Medicare & Prescription Advantage – Lorraine York-Edberg, Franklin-Hampshire SHINE

Medicare:

- People with Coventry/Advantra or Humana Medicare Part D plans can switch plans right away because these plans have been using deceptive advertising practices.
- There's been a change in the plan comparison tool on the Medicare website's drug plan finder. All personal information – Medicare number, effective date, date of birth, zip code, etc. – will be erased if you use the “back” button for your general search. Be sure and use their buttons on the Medicare website.

Prescription Advantage:

- PA has issued new income guidelines, and new applications in different languages, including Russian, Portuguese, Spanish, Vietnamese, Albanian, Khmer, Haitian Creole, and Chinese. Contact Lorraine at 413-773-5555x275 or lyork@fchcc.org for copies.
- A decision on whether Prescription Advantage open enrollment will be made continuous is still pending. *CP update: As of July 13, Prescription Advantage enrollment is continuous. For more details click on <http://www.compartners.org/node/762>*

Reminders:

- There are no citizenship requirements for Prescription Advantage.
- Members can request a co-pay recalculation if their income category has changed due to the new federal poverty levels.

Women's Health Network (WHN) – Molly Butler

- The WHN was supposed to be changing and expanding its network, but technical difficulties will delay implementation until next year.
- Outreach workers enrolling women 40-64 in other programs on the Virtual Gateway can check the WHN box and the application will go right into the system. WHN will follow up with them.

Events

A reminder: the Western Massachusetts Refugee and Immigrant Consortium meets on the last Friday of each month from 10:30 to 12:00 at Cambridge College in Springfield. Call 413-586-7525 x1141 for more information.

A Conference on the State of Breast Cancer in the Commonwealth will be held from 9:00 – 4:00 on Monday, November 5, 2007 at 2345 Commonwealth Avenue in Newton – an opportunity to learn about priorities of key funders, increase community outreach for services, and develop innovative partnerships. Registration is \$20 per person. Register by calling 617-482-3044 or emailing csbcc@green-associates.com

Job News

- Tracy Rogers has left her post as Aide to State Representative Stephen Kulik to become Administrative Assistant for the Town of Gill.