

How is the Virtual Gateway Working For Community-based Enrollment? *A Survey of Community-Oriented Organizations in Massachusetts that Help Residents Access Health Care Coverage*

Methodology: Community Partners sent out an email to 973 people involved in our statewide network inviting them to participate in an online survey about the effects of the Commonwealth's new Virtual Gateway system on enrollment into publicly-funded health care, predominantly MassHealth and Free Care. The results are not intended to be scientific. The purpose is to gather the important and unique perspectives from professionals who work the closest with low- and moderate-income residents of Massachusetts who are now being enrolled via the Virtual Gateway.

Respondents: A total of 61 individuals from across the Commonwealth responded; 52 of these are frontline health access workers directly assisting uninsured residents with the enrollment process. These individuals represent 40 separate organizations including: 38% hospitals; 31% community health centers; 21% community organizations; and 10% local/other health care providers. These organizations are located in 27 towns and cities.

Themes Within the Findings:

The Virtual Gateway as an Enrollment Tool

The Virtual Gateway is a powerful and sophisticated tool but like all tools it requires adjustments and improvements as it evolves and becomes fully integrated into the workflow of frontline workers and the Commonwealth.

- The Virtual Gateway is making frontline workers' jobs easier.
- The Virtual Gateway is significantly reducing the time necessary for an eligibility determination.
- Applying through the Virtual Gateway is a positive change for most clients.
- Structural limitations of the Virtual Gateway make some aspects more cumbersome.
- The Virtual Gateway's specificity means some clients do not fit.
- Technical support is strong.

Coordination and Integration of Systems

Since the Virtual Gateway is part of a larger, complex system of eligibility determination and coverage benefits, the introduction of this new tool has changed systems, procedures and workflow for frontline workers who provide enrollment assistance.

- The introduction of the Virtual Gateway means review and education about how various systems at MassHealth relate.
- New tool highlights needed adjustments in processing of applications.
- The integration of Free Care (the Uncompensated Care Pool) into MassHealth has left some clients unaware of their eligibility.
- Increased role of frontline workers as "gatekeeper" increases caseload.