10 Things Schools Can Do

Millions of children in the United States are uninsured, but are eligible for health coverage under Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Many of their parents and family members may be eligible for Medicaid, too. Outreach and enrollment efforts are needed to help link them with coverage and the health care they need.

From the youngest children in preschool and Head Start, to teens in high school, America's students are better equipped to excel when they are getting the health care services they need. Families trust information from their child's school, so schools are natural partners for finding and enrolling eligible children. Outreach groups eager to work with schools should always start by reaching out to the superintendent or principal or other administrative decision maker.

Schools may want to consider the following activities:

1. **Engage all members of the school community.** In addition to teachers, counselors, and school nurses, don't forget secretaries, cafeteria workers, coaches, bus drivers, janitors and PTA members. They often know students who may be missing out on health care and can link them to coverage.

2. **Train school staff to provide application and renewal help.** School staff can help families complete applications troubleshoot problems and remind parents when it's time to renew coverage. In states that have adopted the Presumptive Eligibility option (see "Policy Tools," below), school staff may be able to enroll eligible children temporarily, giving families time to complete the enrollment process.

3. **Team up with experienced partners.** Community groups with trained staff know how to help families enroll and renew coverage. When a school partners with a health care provider, families may also get a reliable source of care for their children. This brief video shows a vibrant school-health center partnership in Rhode Island.

4. **Make outreach part of the school's routine.** Add insurance status questions to school registration or emergency contact forms and provide help to families with uninsured children. Some schools have used these forms to track progress year to year with the goal of achieving 100% coverage. Schools can add a check-box to the School Lunch application so parents can authorize information to be shared with people able to provide assistance with enrollment in health coverage.

5. **Incorporate outreach at special events.** School health fairs, clinics for school physicals and PTA meetings present a perfect opportunity to provide information to families about Medicaid and CHIP. Other activities occurring throughout the year, such as Back-to-School Night, fund-raisers or school performances, might also be a good way to connect with parents and direct them to a convenient place to get application help later on.

6. **Target schools in which children are likely to qualify for Medicaid or CHIP.** Schools with large proportions of children eligible for free or reduced-price school meals and students in Title I schools are likely to be eligible. Provide application help for these families.

7. **Enlist school athletics coaches.** Without insurance it may be hard to get the physical exam many school districts require in order to participate in school sports. Often families with uninsured children are reluctant to let them participate for fear they might get hurt on the field. See the ***Get Covered, Get in the Game.* strategy guide** for tips on how school and community sports programs can help get eligible children enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP.

8. **Sign up students when they register for Driver Education.** This is another time when families may be concerned about health coverage for their teens.

9. **Identify schools with large numbers of limited English proficient (LEP) students.** Provide bilingual information and application assistance. Some schools conduct English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for adults, which offers a direct link to parents.

10. **Take advantage of school resources, such as computer labs, when appropriate.** One Florida school district established a "Family Connection Corner" with free Internet access in half of its schools. Families can apply online with school staff on hand to help.

Policy Tools

- **Presumptive Eligibility (PE):** Under the PE option, states can authorize "qualified entities," including schools, to enroll children temporarily in Medicaid and CHIP if they appear to qualify. Families get time to complete the full application process, but meanwhile children can get needed health care, including prescription medicine. Learn more and to find out if your state has adopted the PE option for children **here**.
- **Express Lane Eligibility (ELE):** The ELE option in CHIPRA allows states to use findings from other public benefit programs to facilitate enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP. The health coverage program can rely on the family's income information from the School Lunch Program, for example, and does not have to ask the family to provide that information a second time. Learn more and find out if your state has adopted the ELE option **here**.