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CONSUMER HEALTH COALITION

415 EAST OHIO ST, SUITE 300
 PITTSBURGH, PA 15212

newsletter

CHC

ADVOCACY IN ACTION!

Newsletter of Consumer Health Coalition: *Access to Health in our Commonwealth*

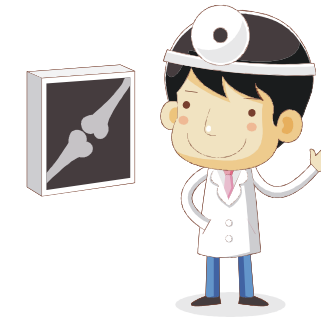
CHC HELPLINE

CHC's Helpline is available to help consumers navigate the process of enrolling in public programs. CHC has two dedicated staff members that assist hundreds of callers a year. CHC also receives consumer referrals from our 100% Pledge partner organizations. These are organizations that come into contact with consumers with unmet healthcare needs. The Pledge organizations refer these consumers to CHC.

CHC staff asks the consumer a few questions to determine for which program they may be eligible. An application is then started over the phone. CHC mails the consumer the application with a check-list detailing the supporting documents needed to complete the application, a self-addressed stamped envelope, and any other useful information.



After a month has elapsed, we follow-up with the consumer to ensure that the application and supporting documents were returned. Upon return, CHC mails the application directly to the provider. When the required 30 day processing time has lapsed, we once again follow-up with the consumer to ensure that they have been successfully enrolled. In the event of problems with the application, CHC also provides assistance with helping to contact the caseworker or insurance provider.



But we don't stop there! Even after enrollment, CHC maintains contact with our consumers to ensure that they stay enrolled in programs. Every 6 to 12 months, program reauthori-

zations are required. Our database prompts the helpline staff to remind consumers when semi-annual or annual income reports and renewal paperwork are due. As a result of this thorough work, the instances of lapses in care are greatly reduced.



Our Helpline also provides assistance in a number of other ways. We can assist with:

- Finding a Primary Care Physician
- Obtaining low-cost prescription medications
- Locating free or low-cost health clinics
- Referring consumers to other agencies or organizations that can provide assistance in other areas

To find out the ways in which CHC can assist YOU or the clients that you serve, please contact:

Leslie Bachurski
 412-456-1877, ext. 200
 lbachurski@consumerhealthcoalition.org

Kimi Bennett
 412-456-1877, ext. 205 (Spanish line)
 kbennett@consumerhealthcoalition.org

Decreasing Barriers to Care

CHC, in collaboration with our community partners, have taken on a project called “Tracking Barriers to Care for Immigrants.” It began when CHC and its partner organizations wanted to take action to address problems it noticed in accessing healthcare, enrolling in social programs, and staying on these programs, experienced by those with Limited English Proficiency.



Our targeted population is the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) speakers. CHC and our partner organizations noticed that language barriers were affecting access to quality medical care, but the group did not have any way of recording these occurrences. Together, we decided to track the barriers faced by LEP consumers as they happened, using forms, which we passed on to our partner organizations. The group tracked the reoccurring problems using “Tracking Barriers to Care” forms, which were filled out by the staff member working with the consumer at a variety of organizations around the Pittsburgh area.

Once the “Tracking Barriers to Care” forms were collected and compiled, we were able to see that the most common barriers to care encountered were due to a lack of translation and lack of informed consent. This has led to a lapse in medical coverage, missed diagnosis, people needing to return to the care provider multiple times, inability to give proper discharge or at-home instructions, and even refusal of care.

CHC plans to release a report, detailing the project and its results. The report will be sent to the same providers, state and federal institutions tracked in our report. We will continue to follow-up with these providers and institutions to make certain that these problems are resolved and do not persist. By doing this, we hope to call attention to these issues and demonstrate the vital need for a non-discriminatory solution and the implementation of widespread positive change to ensure that all persons, regardless of sex, ethnicity, race, or primary language, receive quality, informed health care.

Please contact Leslie at 412-456-1877 x200 to request a copy of the full report.



What are my rights?

Both federal and state laws prohibit national origin discrimination as it affects persons with limited English proficiency. Federal requirements derive from Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Under the Civil Rights Act, all health care providers who receive Federal financial assistance must provide meaningful access to their programs by persons with limited English proficiency. Thus, in the health care context, this includes virtually all: hospitals, nursing homes, home health agencies, managed care organizations, physicians, and other providers who receive Federal financial assistance.

Under this act, there is an obligation on covered providers to:

- Provide competent interpreter services free of charge.
- Offer oral and written translations of important documents.
- Notify Limited English Proficiency persons of their rights to interpretive services.

Importantly, in meetings its obligations, a health care provider may not require a person with limited English proficiency to provide his own interpreter and especially may not require use of a family member.

Special thanks to the Pennsylvania Health Law Project for lending their legal expertise on these issues.

I speak...



To ensure consumers are able to receive translation services, Kimi Bennett, CHC’s Latino Outreach Specialist, has been giving consumers the “I speak” card to facilitate access to healthcare. Because language barriers have affected our consumers in so many different areas, we felt that a short-term solution had to be implemented in addition to our long-term advocacy solution. The front of the card has two lines for languages spoken, while the back of the

card contains the consumer’s demographic information, medical provider information, and Kimi’s phone number at CHC so that they can call her with any questions.

The “I speak” card is wallet-sized for convenience and is meant to be used at any hospital visit, appointments with County Assistance Offices, WIC consultations, and at any other federal or state institution. The card states that federal law requires that translation services be provided at no cost to the consumer. CHC believes this is a 2-part solution, by ensuring that instant interpretation will be provided upon showing of the card, and by its use as an education tool for the future. We hope that this card will eliminate instances of language barriers.

For more information about the “I Speak” card, please contact Kimi Bennett at 412-456-1877, ext. 205 or at kbennett@consumerhealthcoalition.org