

North Star News

OCTOBER 2011

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"Keeping Medicaid intact and fully implementing the Affordable Care Act are clearly important to low-income Pennsylvanians with serious health care needs—but they're important to the rest of Pennsylvania as well."

Families USA
Sept. 2011

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For the Health Of It

On Monday, 3 October the US Supreme Court opened its new term. Already on the docket is a challenge to state-enacted Medicaid cuts and it is quite likely that the constitutional challenge to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will be brought before the court this term. Add to that the ongoing work to educate and defend the ACA, Medicaid and Medicare, and our work is large in both importance and scope.

The main objective of the ACA is to expand health insurance coverage to the uninsured through a strong foundation within Medicaid. Components of the ACA are already in place to protect Medicaid, and a second provision will take effect in 2014. In 2010, the ACA created the "Maintenance of Effort" (MOE) requirement, preventing states from reducing Medicaid eligibility or making it more difficult to enroll. The ACA will take steps to expand Medicaid in 2014, at which time eligibility will be consistent across all states. All individuals under the age of 65 with a family income of 133% of poverty or less will be newly eligible (about \$30,000 annual income for family of four).

With full implementation of the ACA in 2014, about half of the uninsured who will gain access to coverage will do so through the expansion of Medicaid. With success of the ACA rooted in Medicaid, it is critical that we act now to preserve the program. Read more about Medicaid in the following pages, including the impact here in Pennsylvania.

We are ready for the challenge and look forward to building a better health care system.

We welcome your story, your energy, your wisdom and your passion!

Join us....for *"the health of it!"*



PA Campaign for Better Care

THERE IS A BETTER WAY!

We all deserve comprehensive, coordinated health care. We get it. There is a better way. And we invite you to join a campaign like no other— the Campaign for Better Care.

The PA Campaign for Better Care (PA CBC) is a statewide campaign to secure quality, coordinated, and patient-centered care in PA. CHC is the driving force behind the Campaign here in PA, which was selected as one of six state-based campaigns along with Maine, Massachusetts, North Carolina, New Jersey, and Ohio. A partnership with Community Catalyst, a national healthcare advocacy organization, provides valuable oversight and guidance.

READ MORE about PA CBC at www.consumerhealthcoalition.org

Raising Health



Over the next several weeks, Families USA will be releasing state-based reports on the impact of Medicaid. The Pennsylvania report is now available, and contains data that provides a look into the tens of thousands Pennsylvania citizens who rely on Medicaid.

In addition to seniors and persons with disabilities, Medicaid provides health coverage to persons with cancer, diabetes, chronic lung disease, heart disease, and stroke. Medicaid allows these individuals to see the doctor, fill prescriptions, and access critical preventive care.

The chart to the right contains additional information about Pennsylvanians with serious health care needs who rely on Medicaid.

Subset of Health Care Needs	Total # with Medicaid	Total # Seniors (65+)
Cancer	43,750	14,980
Diabetes	150,420	42,750
Chronic Lung Disease	342,120	34,600
Heart Disease or Stroke	378,270	105,810

Many people are keeping close watch on the work of the newly formed Super Committee as concern grows that critical programs like Medicaid and Medicare could be at risk. Here at CHC, we have created a DEFENSE OF MEDICAID: ADVOCACY POSTCARD. The postcards will be collected statewide and delivered to PA Senator Pat Toomey. On the back, space is provided to leave your own comment. The front of the card features a NOW and LATER theme with these facts about Medicaid:

- 🕒 Cuts to Medicaid **NOW** would force the 77,000 Pennsylvania citizens currently receiving home and community-based services into costly institutional care **LATER**¹.
- 🕒 Cuts to Medicaid **NOW** would eliminate health care access for thousands **LATER**, including the 50% of beneficiaries who are children².
- 🕒 With cuts or efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) **NOW**... 3 million Pennsylvanians will lose access to quality, affordable health care **LATER**, including 2 million seniors who now have access to free preventive health services³.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Take 5 advocacy postcards and ask family, friends, and colleagues to join in and do the same! Contact Sally Jo Snyder at (412) 456-1877 x203 OR ssnyder@consumerhealthcoalition.org

Advocacy and Action

As we continue our advocacy efforts to:

- ★ Educate about the provisions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA)
- ★ Create a patient-centered system of hospital discharge to reduce hospital readmissions
- ★ Defend Medicaid and Medicare

It is imperative that we are first, involved. From sharing your story, to being educated through the monthly PA-CBC calls, to signing and sending "Now and Later" postcards, advocacy only happens when individuals step up and become involved!

To be a strong advocate, stay informed. On everyone's "favorite's listings" should be the websites for Consumer Health Coalition and Families USA. Read the daily paper and choose the local as well as the national papers. Be broad in what you take in and be well-rounded in perspective.

Make it personal. Ask, "Why does this matter to me?" Answer by giving your time and efforts.

Advocates Speak Out

As a caregiver for her mother, Denise Weis understands the importance of quality and coordination within the health care system. Over the years, Denise and her siblings have created a system to coordinate care for their mother, who was diagnosed with congestive heart failure and also suffers from Alzheimer's. "My mother is going to be 82 next year," Denise said, "and I feel blessed that we still have her."

"I am more aware and concerned about the quality of health care because of the situation with my mother," said Denise. Denise has been fortunate to have good experiences with health care providers, which she contributes to her ability to be proactive in her mother's care and an advocate for her well-being. Denise is also aware of the critical need to preserve social safety net programs like Medicaid and Medicare. Without these programs, her mother would no longer be able to access her health care providers or afford the medications that help maintain her health.

In April 2011, Denise completed *Lift Up Your Voice!* with the PA CBC, a training that teaches people the basics of advocacy. Denise is a tremendous advocate and actively involved with CHC. In speaking about her role as an advocate, Denise stated there are no boundaries to what she can achieve: "I've done things that I've never dreamed I would do," she said.

Since *Lift Up Your Voice!*, Denise has completed multiple visits to her elected officials both locally and in Harrisburg, joined several healthcare rallies (pictured), and created a t-shirt for a project that expresses the importance of home- and community-based services.

Way to go, Denise!



News You Can Use

→ State Medicaid Reports are now available from Families USA!

In partnership with the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, the American Diabetes Association, and the American Lung Association, Families USA released a series of state-based reports on Medicaid.

The PA Report is now available [here](#) or at www.familiesusa.org/issues/medicaid as September 2011 *Medicaid's Impact In the States: Helping People with Serious Health Care Needs*.

→ Check out a blog post from Community Catalyst on the deficit and health care: *We Can Have Our Deficit Reduction and Keep Our Health Security Too*.

(Available [here](#) OR at www.blog.communitycatalyst.org in the 20 September post)

→ The New York Times and Robert Pear look at the balance between the needs of patients and providers in the debate over cuts to Medicaid and Medicare: *In Cuts to Health Programs, Experts See Difficult Task in Protecting Patients*.

(Available [here](#) OR at www.nytimes.com in Politics from 20 September 2011)



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Consumer Health Coalition was founded in 1996. We are a non-profit health care advocacy organization with a mission to "inspire a consumer movement to advance health and enhance access to quality, affordable health care."

We believe that access to quality, affordable health care, and ultimately good health and wellness, are critical to a person's ability to reach his or her potential. We also know that people experience disparate "starting points" or access to resources that are unfortunately correlated with socioeconomic status, racial or ethnic background, and disability status. CHC is dedicated to the eradication of disparities in health access and outcomes, and will continue pushing until every person has the health coverage and care they need.

Mark your calendar for these important dates!

October 2011

FRIDAY OCTOBER 7

Senior Citizen Health Expo

10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Location:

Robert Morris University Island Sports Center
7600 Grand Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15225

SATURDAY OCTOBER 8

Pumpkin Fest

1:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Located on the North Side

East Ohio Street and Cedar Ave

TUESDAY OCTOBER 11

CHC Speaker Series

Dr. Ken Thompson

7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Location:

Carlow College— Antonian Theatre
3333 Fifth Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

THURSDAY OCTOBER 13

PA CBC Conference Call

Medicaid with Families USA

10:00 am to 11:00 am

Call-in: (712) 432-1630

Access code: 411307#

SATURDAY OCTOBER 15

Advocacy and Action Workshop

Building Change Convergence

3:00 pm to 4:30 pm

Location: Heinz Regional History Center

1212 Smallman Street

Pittsburgh, PA 15222

MONDAY OCTOBER 24

Lift Up Your Voice! Advocacy Training

9:30 am to 2:30 pm

Location: First United Methodist Church

Oxford Center Room

707 Sassafras St.

Erie, PA 16501