



For the Health Of It

Happy New Year from the staff at CHC! We hope you had a peaceful and joyous holiday season. With the New Year comes a new edition of the North Star News: this month, we focus on the continued defense of Medicaid and Medicare, and also the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. With the failure of the Super Committee last November and the 2012 election primary season in full swing, the future of Medicaid and Medicare has become the center of the debate with both Democrats and Republicans. Check out the *News You Can Use* section on page 3 to read an article from the Associated Press that cites Medicare as one of the most important economic issues in 2012 as baby boomers continue to age and join the already over-burdened program.

At the start of 2012, we know that Medicaid and Medicare will continue to play a key role at both the federal and state levels. With record enrollment and an uninsured rate that continues to grow, it has never been more important to defend these programs. Safety-net programs like Medicaid now have nearly 48.6 million people enrolled, which is a 73% increase from the enrollment in 2000 (Census Bureau Report, Sept 2011). Safety-net programs and Medicaid not only serve as a lifeline to the uninsured, but also take on the millions who continue to lose employment-based coverage: Not only were nearly 50 million people uninsured in 2010, but the number of people with job-based health insurance actually dropped by nearly 10% (Census Bureau Report, Sept 2011).

Continued threats to safety-net programs and attempts to halt implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) means the new year also brings a new opportunity to protect critical programs and advocate affordable coverage for those who are still uninsured. With the ACA set to go before the Supreme Court in March, our work continues to defend full implementation of the law and to protect the nearly 2.9 million Pennsylvanians who are already benefiting from the ACA (Families USA, March 2011). Read more about the ACA in the following pages, and check out an implementation timeline on page 2 that highlights new provisions to take effect throughout the year ahead.

Finally, we take a look back at 2011 to celebrate the hard work and dedication of the advocates and coalition members involved in the PA Campaign for Better Care. THANK YOU for your continued effort in our shared work. We would like to extend a special thank you to Sue Etters, who became actively involved in the Campaign in 2011 and continues to be a tremendous advocate. Read more about Sue on page 3.



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

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Raising Health



Nearly 2.9 million Pennsylvanians are already benefiting from the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Several key provisions took effect throughout 2011 to help make health care more affordable for seniors. Here are two key ways the ACA addressed out-of-pocket costs in 2011:

- ★ Access to **free preventive services** such as blood pressure and cholesterol tests, cancer screenings, nutrition counseling, annual wellness exams, flu and pneumonia shots, and routine vaccinations like measles and meningitis.
- ★ The donut hole continued to close: 2.65 million people nationwide received **discounts on brand name drugs** while in the donut hole. Out-of-pocket expenses shrank substantially for seniors and persons with disabilities with an **average annual savings per person of \$569**.

Not only is the ACA set to go before the Supreme Court in March, but state-based attempts to halt implementation also continue. Medicaid expansion is the foundation for health reform, which means attempts to cut Medicaid pose a double-edged threat to individuals and families. We face a critical need to educate elected officials and engage the community in efforts to defend both the ACA and safety-net programs like Medicaid. **In fact, repeal of key ACA provisions could lead to an additional 914,000 uninsured individuals in Pennsylvania alone** (Families USA, 2011).

WHAT WE MUST DO:

- Educate the public with educational events. Watch this newsletter, the CHC website, and your email for additional information.
- Empower the consumer voice with a series of Advocacy Workshops.
- Engage your elected officials in a constant and consistent manner. We will provide leave-behind materials and talking points to assist your work.

Advocacy Toolbox

WE EACH HAVE A STORY. OUR PERSONAL STORIES ARE POWERFUL.

As we look forward to 2012 and plot out the shared work and advocacy the year to come requires, the ability to share personal, powerful stories will play a key role in educating elected officials and engaging others in our efforts. Here is an exercise to help you develop a strong and concise story of your own: **THE 27-9-3 RULE**.

With the 27-9-3 Rule, you can create a story that contains only 27 words, takes 9 seconds to share, and contains 3 points. Here are a few tips to help you get started:

- What will be the focal point of your story? Select the three main points you want to convey.
- Imagine you encounter your congressperson at a community event. Time is limited. In a concise and impacting way, convey your message based on the three points you selected.
- Get it down on paper... Again, focus on being strong and concise.
- Edit your story and cut it down to 27 words.
- Test your story: Can you share it in 9 seconds or less?

I see a new doctor every time I visit my medical provider. Unfamiliar with who I am and cannot see the big picture. My care? Not coordinated or consistent (Roy, Erie).

After experiencing trauma, receiving clear and concise verbal and visual communication is vital so that doctors, patients, and staff know what is going on, which promotes healing (Sue, Pittsburgh).

A discharge from a hospital is often chaotic, confusing, disconnected, resulting in frequent readmissions. We must develop a clear, connected patient-centered system that improves healthcare quality (Sally, Pittsburgh).



Advocates Speak Out

As a person with a disability, Sue Ethers understands the importance of dignity and respect within the health care system. In December 2009, Sue was struck by a car, an accident that required hospitalization and several months in a nursing home. According to Sue, steps taken by both the hospital and the nursing home helped make her transition back home successful. A comprehensive discharge plan helped Sue learn about shower benches, hand-held nozzles, and a walk-in tub, all of which help Sue remain independent and living in her own home.

Many patients like Sue depend on comprehensive and coordinated care to transition successfully and avoid re-admission. Nearly 20% of all Medicare patients are re-admitted to the hospital within thirty days of discharge (www.CommunityCatalyst.org), many times because care was not coordinated properly or the patient did not understand the discharge instructions.

Sue credits her success to the fact that care was centered on her needs, and the treatment plan presented in a format she could understand: "It really made me feel like they cared," Sue said, "showing compassion and concern for the patient is so important." Sue also credits her successful transition to the comprehensive discharge plan: "They told me about different devices they had for the disabled that I honestly did not know about," she said. Post-discharge, patient surveys completed over the phone by a nurse tracked Sue's progress and also contained questions about the quality of her care.

Sue is a tremendous advocate and actively involved in the PA Campaign for Better Care. Sue completed the Lift Up Your Voice! advocacy training in June 2011 and, since that time, joined the monthly Campaign calls, wrote a Letter to the Editor that was published in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, visited her local elected officials, and created a t-shirt for a project that expresses the importance of home- and community-based services.



News You Can Use

- Check out an [op-ed](#) from the Post-Gazette about the role of health reform in the 2012 election primary season (also available at www.post-gazette.com/pg/12005/1201363-109-0.stm).
- Read an [article](#) published in the Associated Press about baby boomers and the Medicare debate in 2012 (also available at news.yahoo.com/2012-medicare-debate-baby-boomers-095929954.html).
- Families USA announces the annual Current Population Survey released by the Census Bureau [here](#). Read the [full report](#).
- Families USA highlighted a project by the Colorado Consumer Health Initiative to take back the term Obamacare and change public opinion of the law. Check out these links to see the newly launched campaign with [10 Reasons to Thank Obamacare](#) and the [10 Obamacare Myths](#).



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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!

January 2012

TUESDAY JANUARY 3

Healthy Hospitals Workgroup
4:00 pm to 6:00 pm
Location:
CHC
415 E Ohio St Suite 300
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

THURSDAY JANUARY 12

PA CBC Conference Call
Medicaid Payment Reform
with Community Catalyst
10:00 am to 11:00 am
Call-in: (712) 432-1630
Access code: 411307#

TUESDAY JANUARY 31

Conference Call Hosted by HHS
Topic: ACA 101
12:30 pm
Register with ACA101@hhs.gov

February 2012

MONDAY FEBRUARY 6

Healthy Hospitals Workgroup
6:00 pm to 7:30 pm
Location:
CHC
415 E Ohio St Suite 300
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 7

State Budget Address
by Governor Corbett