

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE OF SARASOTA COUNTY

Health Coverage for Uninsured Children Subcommittee

May 25, 2004

Members Present: Sarah Gorman, Chair
Virginia Brockman
Eva Goodwin
Lou Anne Koch
Nancy Shoemaker
Beverly Stockton

Members Absent: Mary Crowley
Gloria DeHaven
Janet Kahn
Debra Kaufman
Kim Kutch
Sherri Reynolds

Others Present: James McCloud

Staff: Claire Alexander
Chip Taylor

County and Community Alliance Perspective

Chip Taylor stated the Board of County Commissioners has made a commitment to fund the non-Title XXI program over the past few years to support health care for children. Based on the changes made to the KidCare legislation, it is not clear what their commitment will be next year. The Alliance established this subcommittee to look at health care for children beyond what is provided by the Healthy Kids program. They have looked at it in a bigger framework than the County has so far. This subcommittee has elevated the issue in terms of importance and has expanded the notion about what the community's obligation is. All players in the community have to be involved to solve the problem. The challenge is to stay at the higher level but stay focused. The Community Alliance is in a position to influence the Commission and others in the community to do more in the area of child health coverage.

Updates

Virginia Brockman gave an update on the May 10 Florida KidCare Regional Meeting. There were not as many concrete answers as initially hoped. They asked for local input

Subcommittee Goal: 100% of children in Sarasota County have access to affordable, basic health care.

but it was not clear how much difference the local input would make. There is never a cap placed on Medicaid; however the other three Healthy Kids programs (Medikids, Health Kids and CMS) are capped at a total of 398,000 children. That cap will definitely be met. Continuous enrollment no longer exists and two open enrollment periods may be conducted each year if funds and slots are available. The next open enrollment period is scheduled for January 2005 but that will not be confirmed until December. The legislation does allow for an open enrollment period in September and January but the September 2004 enrollment period will not occur due to funding issues.

Applications accepted during open enrollment can only be received during a specific time period and must be 100% complete before they can be accepted. If there are 50 slots on January 1, the first 50 completed applications received will be accepted and approved if eligible. This could possibly mean all slots could be filled literally within hours.

Eligibility barriers include a requirement for 3 proofs of income such as copies of income tax forms, pay stubs, and approval letters for benefits such as child support or Social Security. Families who are not legal residents will not be able to provide this documentation. A second barrier is that if a parent has a job, they must prove that they either cannot obtain medical insurance for their children through their employer or if they can, that it would cost more than 5% of the family income. Family income-whether gross or net-has not yet been defined. It is also not clear whether the costs of the insurance that will be considered will be the full family coverage or prorated for the children. The comprehensiveness and quality of the health coverage offered by the employer is not a factor for consideration.

Virginia stated an issue that the Sarasota Board of County Commissioners will need to address is funding for the non-Title XXI children. It appears the intention of the Legislature is to eliminate all of the non-Title XXI children from coverage since they are funded totally with state and local dollars. We currently fund 296 slots, however, as children drop out of the program, the slot is eliminated and will not be filled. As of May 1, there were 279 children enrolled. That number is expected to continue to drop due to the new eligibility rules. It is anticipated that 20 - 30% of the children currently funded through Title XXI have access to health care coverage and will no longer be eligible. If the County agrees to continue funding the non-Title XXI children, it will be committed to the full amount regardless of the number of children who are enrolled.

Discussion ensued regarding Sarasota County's options regarding use of the existing \$200,000 (plus the required match of \$71,000) for health care services for children. There are other groups of children that we may need to look at, for example, those who are currently enrolled in Title XXI program but will be removed due to the new eligibility rules.

Matrix of Categories of Need and Available Resources

Discussion took place regarding the matrix Sarah Gorman developed. There are approximately 50,000 residents in Sarasota County under the age of 19. Whether or not

private insurance carriers would provide aggregate data on the number of children covered was not known. Suggestions were made to revise the matrix including adding dental health as a category and to use a total number in each box instead of breaking each subtotal down into different categories. More detailed information can be provided as a footnote.

In order to determine how many children under 19 currently have access to some sort of health care coverage, we need to start compiling the matrix and gathering additional data. The main category the subcommittee needs to focus on is basic medical care and dental care. Behavioral health care is currently being addressed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Stakeholders' Consortium.

It was suggested that someone needs to meet with Mark Lazarus to obtain additional information to fill in the matrix.

It is important to specify the definitions of key terms used so that there is consistency with the data. It was agreed that the data should reflect the projected number of children who will be covered on July 1, 2005.

Additional resources will be needed to conduct the survey over the next couple of months. Sarah approached the Executive Committee last month for their approval for the subcommittee to apply for a grant to hire someone to assist with this project. The Executive Committee agreed it was a good idea, however, they are not a 501(C)3 and another entity would have to act as the fiscal agent. It was suggested that a doctoral student at USF may be interested in the project. Nancy Shoemaker offered to call USF's School of Social Work to see if there was an interest.

Sarah reported that in Santa Clara County, California a non-profit corporation was established to be the insurance provider for all children in the county. If an organization such as a church or a service club wanted to provide funds to cover a certain number of children, they would provide those funds through this corporation. There will have to be some type of infrastructure created in Sarasota County in order to make this work.

A survey was conducted in Sarasota County in 1995 or 1996 that may provide baseline data regarding the number of children who were covered by health coverage. Several partners funded the survey. Bill Little or Liz Bumpus would probably have a copy of the survey results.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Health Coverage for Uninsured Children Subcommittee is scheduled for Tuesday, June 22, at 3:30 p.m. at the Healthy Start office, 1750 17th Street, Building M.