



CONNECTICUT WOMEN'S HEALTH CAMPAIGN e-News, July 31, 2009

In this issue: New proposals to cut health programs in the Governor and Appropriations budget. Addressing health disparities in national health reform.

CWHC News

Take a Quick Survey. Do You Exercise? Thanks to all those who have responded! Please take this short survey, and send to your networks. **We need results from 15 more women!** http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=UHH3bo6i_2bxUjutA5tnDdaQ_3d_3d

State Budget Update

Both the Governor and legislature have released new budget plans with a common bottom line, as required in SB 1162, now PA 09-214, An Act Requiring Consensus Revenue Estimates. This bill was heard and re-passed with a veto-proof majority during the July 20th veto override session.

The Governor's new plan includes all of the cuts as previously reported in the April *CWHC e-News to the Medicaid/State Administered Medical Assistance (SAGA) including* adult dental coverage over the counter medications, cost sharing for adults, HUSKY B premium increases, state funded coverage for recent legal immigrants and vision and Non Emergency Medical Transportation, to name a few. It also adds new changes affecting health, including women's health.

New changes in the Governor's plan.

Revenue. Increasing taxes on various tobacco products, including the cigarette tax from \$2 to \$3 per pack; increasing taxes on alcohol by 10%; and increases in corporate surcharges.

Spending. Eliminate all funding for school-based health centers; reduce funding for Healthy Start prenatal outreach and community health services.

- Eliminate the Commission on Aging and the Office of the Healthcare Advocate; cut the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Children by 50%; merge the African-American, Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs and Asian Affairs Commission into one "minority" Commission with further cuts.
- Numerous cuts to elderly services including the fall prevention programs, independent living centers, the long term care ombudsman, nursing homes and transportation, as well as capping enrollment in the Connecticut home care program for elders.

New Changes in the Appropriations budget.

- Merge the Office of Health Care Advocate into DPH (Also in Governor's budget).
- Shift funding for the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program to federal stimulus funds. It is unclear whether federal dollars have been received and allocated for this function.

Proposed cuts by both the Governor and Appropriations Committee to Medicaid/SAGA which are of concern to women's health:

- **Change the definition of "medical necessity"**. This would be a complete transformation of the program which would make HUSKY more like commercial plans. This change would particularly affect adults, mostly women. This change could result in a windfall for managed care organizations (with greatly expanded rights to deny, limit, reduce care) and dubious savings for state government.
- **HUSKY outreach**. All current state funds would be eliminated, thereby reducing case finding, retention, renewal and eligibility assistance for eligible families.
- **"Integrated Care Initiative" a.k.a. Medicare Advantage special needs plans** for those dually eligible for Medicaid and Medicare. Special needs plans provide care coordination to manage chronic and multiple conditions. There is limited data on the effectiveness of such plans on those with chronic needs. Some studies suggest poor outcomes for such plans in other states.
- Restrict **ConnPACE enrollment** to Nov 15-Dec 31 or within 31 days of becoming eligible. (Current enrollment is open at any time.)

Federal Update

House Action on Health Disparities. Tri Committee legislation establishes a Bureau of Health Information to develop standards to identify, collect, and publish key health data, including information on race, ethnicity, and primary language. The Bureau would identify, in consultation with OMH, indicators and data sources to reduce health disparities. Current federal and state data collection efforts on health disparities are inconsistent. A new Bureau and new Assistant Secretary focused explicitly on establishing standards for collecting data by race, ethnicity, primary language and other population subgroups will be critical for assessing and reducing inequalities in health and health care.

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies has produced very comprehensive analyses of federal health care reform proposals and how they will address racial and ethnic health and health care inequities. The Joint Center will also post an analysis of the Senate Finance Committee Chairman Baucus' bill, as well as the leading Republican proposals.

1) Analysis of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee's "Affordable Health Choices Act," introduced by Senator Kennedy on June 9, 2009.

<http://www.jointcenter.org/hpi/sites/all/files/Senate%20HELP%20Bill%2006%2025%2009%20FINAL%20REVISED.pdf>

2) Analysis of the House "Tri-Committee" legislation, introduced on July 14, 2009.

<http://www.jointcenter.org/hpi/sites/all/files/HR3200TriCommAnalysis071709FINAL2.pdf>

A detailed look at **Medicare provisions in the House Tri-Committee bill**, including breakouts of the savings and new spending is available from the Kaiser Family Foundation.

<http://www.kff.org/healthreform/upload/7948.pdf>

Women's Health Resource

Reproductive Roulette: Declining Reproductive Health, Dangerous Chemicals, and a New Way Forward by the Center for American Progress cites fertility problems, miscarriages, preterm births, and birth defects as rising while chemical production has increased dramatically. The number of chemicals registered for commercial use now stands at 80,000—a 30 percent increase since 1979.

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/07/pdf/reproductive_roulette.pdf

Select findings:

- Adolescents are widely exposed to hormone-disrupting chemicals found in cosmetics as their reproductive systems mature.
- One study found that women plastics workers more frequently sought treatment for infertility than the general population.

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http://www.cga.ct.gov/pcsw/cwhc/pages/cwhc_membership.asp CWHC members will not be asked to sign on each year. If you would like to change your membership status, please contact

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