

CONNECTICUT WOMEN'S HEALTH CAMPAIGN

April 9, 2009 E-News

In this issue: A comprehensive overview of provisions within the Connecticut Appropriations Committee's proposed budget which would affect women's health; a profile of the ConnPACE Plus and the CT Home Care program for Elders; plus all the information you need to keep up on women's health in Connecticut!

Legislative Update

Appropriations Budget. The Appropriations Committee released its proposed budget nearly two weeks before its deadline on April 2nd. A progressive revenue package was included, which enabled the committee to forego most of the deep cuts that had been proposed. Federal stimulus dollars in Medicaid have also helped to maintain the public insurance safety net -- building blocks for universal health care.

Highlights of Appropriations Committee's proposed budget (April 2) affecting women's health.

Family planning and smoking cessation services. These two areas have been priorities of the CWHC for *many* years. This year, the committee added \$1M for smoking each year and \$2M for family planning the first year. Savings in the amount of \$4M is anticipated as a result of expanded family planning services in the second year. (State family planning dollars are matched by federal Medicaid at 90 cents on the dollar.)

SANE/SAFE Program. The committee appropriated \$275,000 to establish a sexual assault forensic examiner program, providing 24/7 on-call coverage to certain hospitals to respond when an adolescent or adult victim comes to an emergency room.

Restorations by the committee (to the Governor's proposed cuts) to Medicaid/State Administered Medical Assistance (SAGA):

- Adult dental coverage (with enhanced utilization review)
- Coverage for over the counter medications
- Co-payments and monthly premiums for adults
- Coverage for medical interpreters
- Self-declaration of income for HUSKY A applications
- Funds to community health centers for prenatal care for undocumented women
- HUSKY B premium increases
- HUSKY performance monitoring
- HUSKY coverage for pregnant women and children who have been in the country for less than 5 years.
- Restore SAGA coverage of vision and Non Emergency Medical Transportation.

Partial Restoration of AIDS Funding. Funding for AIDS services has gone through state and federal changes and losses since 2007. The Appropriations committee budget would restore a

portion of AIDS service funding (\$1.7M) that had been proposed to be cut under the Governor's proposal.

Prescriptions drugs under Medicaid and SAGA. While the Governor's budget proposed more restrictive measures, the committee plan subjects newly prescribed mental health medications to a preferred drug list; reduces 30 day temporary supply for drugs requiring prior authorization to 14 day temporary supply; maintains the 5 day emergency supply when authorization cannot be obtained; and imposes prior authorization of certain high cost drugs.

Medicare Part D and related plans. Provides limited funding and imposes review and appeal requirements for those dually eligible for Medicaid and Medicare as well as those on ConnPACE, changes the ConnPACE enrollment fee from \$30 to \$45; requires co-pays for Part D Wrap around limited to \$15 per month. The Appropriations committee also removed the Governor's proposal to increase ConnPACE asset test; and to impose an open enrollment period. Notably the committee adds nine positions and funding to implement ConnPACE plus, which will expand those eligible for prescription subsidies. For more information see Program Update.

The committee also restored the Governor's proposed cuts to School-based health centers and cut Charter Oak health plan funding due to slower than projected growth in caseload.

Both the Governor's budget and the Appropriations Committee's also increase access to SNAP (formerly Food Stamps) and elderly nutrition programs.

Changes to Medicaid/SAGA retained by the committee 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. Managed care plans that provide care coordination to manage chronic and multiple conditions. The plan is due to limited data on the effectiveness of such plans on those with chronic needs. Some studies suggest poor outcome evaluations for such plans in other states.

Notes on Medicaid and Chronic Needs

- **Nursing homes.** Eliminates rate increases for nursing homes, as did the Governor.
- **CT Home Care Program for Elders.** Like the Governor, increases funding for anticipated growth in caseload. However, the Governor proposed capping the caseload for the state-funded portion of the program, while the committee removed the cap. The committee does impose cost sharing for the state-funded portion of the program

- **Adult Day Care.** Committee increases adult day care reimbursement rates by 10%.
- **HIV/AIDS Waiver Program.** Committee continues scheduled roll out of HIV/AIDS home and community based waiver to provide enhanced services for up to 100 people living with HIV/AIDS.

Program Update

ConnPACE Plus Expands Prescription Assistance and Saves State Dollars

The State deficit mitigation plan enacted in early March, included the “ConnPACE Plus” program. This program enables more people to qualify for the Medicare Savings Program (MSP) and the Low Income Subsidy (LIS-of Medicare Part D) The result will be prescription drug assistance for many more individuals with higher incomes. At the same time, the state will receive increased federal funding for MSP and LIS eligible individuals, reducing the burden on the state-only ConnPACE program. The Department of Social Services is supposed to implement ConnPACE Plus immediately. For more information call CHOICES at 1-800-944-9422.

Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders. Designed for adults age 65 and over who are in need of supportive services in order to continue living independently in the community. Qualified individuals receive care management and home care services within certain limits. The program is funded by the State Department of Social Services.

Applicants must require help with at least one “critical need” for the State- funded Program and three “critical needs” for the Medicaid Waiver Program. Critical needs include: bathing, dressing, toileting, transferring, eating /feeding, meal preparation, and medication administration. Applicants may qualify even if someone is currently providing assistance in any of these areas. There are income and asset limits on certain aspects of the program.

A care manager who has experience in understanding the needs of elders conducts an assessment, develops a plan of care, arranges for needed home care services through contracted provider agencies, and monitors the plan to ensure that the client receives the support that he or she needs to remain safely at home. **To make a referral to the program, call 1-800-445-5394 and choose option #4.** Source: Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut Home Care Program

Women’s Health Calendar

The Connecticut State Dental Association Sponsors Free Dental Care- Friday- Saturday April 17th-18th Receive free dental care at the New Haven Public Field House, 480 Sherman Parkway, New Haven. Visit www.csda.com for details.

CT Partnership for Long Term Care Forum- on April 23rd at LP Wilson Community Center in Windsor, April 30th at St. Andrew’s Church in Colchester and May 20th at the UCONN Health Center in Farmington. For more information, <http://www.ct.gov/opm/cwp/view.asp?a=2995&q=383414>.

New Haven Senior and Disability Expo- Join us as we continue to roll out EESI! The Expo runs from 10 am to 2 pm at the New Haven Athletic Center on 480 Sherman Parkway, New Haven. For the full flyer, http://www.marywade.org/documents/SeniorandDisabilityExpoLiterature2009_000.pdf

Women's Health Resources

Health First Authority Draft Plan. The Health First Authority was charged with establishing a health plan which would guarantee ways that all CT residents would have access to health insurance and safe, quality health care. Fifteen months of work by over fifteen members of the business, labor, government, provide and advocacy community have resulted in this draft plan.

http://www.cga.ct.gov/ph/HealthFirst/Docs/HealthFirst_DRAFT-Final_Report.pdf

The Uninsured population in Connecticut. A new report from Families USA, "Americans at Risk", takes a closer look at who is uninsured in Connecticut, this is what they found:

- One out of four (25.1%) Connecticut residents under age 65 went without health insurance for all or part of 2007-2008.
- Most Connecticut uninsured are in working families.
- Of the 758,000 uninsured, over two-thirds went without health coverage for six months or longer during this period.
- Almost half of those earning less than 200% of federal poverty and almost half of Latino/Hispanics were uninsured for part of the period.

<http://www.familiesusa.org/assets/pdfs/americans-at-risk/connecticut.pdf>

Health Workforce Information Center. See

<http://www.healthworkforceinfo.org/>, a website funded by a grant from the U.S. Health and Human Services, for events, trainings, organizations, funding information, news and updates, topics and more related to the Health workforce.

Women's Health Fact

In Connecticut, 68,500 of the 710,116 women of reproductive age became pregnant in 2005. 61% of these pregnancies resulted in live births and 24% in induced abortions.

<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/sfaa/connecticut.html>

Join Us!

To see a list of CWHC members, our principles or a sign up sheet, see

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 Lisa.Sementilli@cga.ct.gov

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