

Winter 2005

PROGRESS REPORT

State Budget Impact on Healthy Kids

Throughout the gubernatorial campaign, John Lynch emphasized his support of the Healthy Kids programs and his intent to extend coverage to more eligible children. In his inaugural address, Governor Lynch reiterated his commitment to children's healthcare coverage. The Governor took the first step in fulfilling his pledge to expand coverage by providing for the enrollment of an additional 6,000 children in the Healthy Kids programs over the next two years. Unfortunately, a typographical error resulted in a budget shortfall to accomplish this goal.

Legislative leaders are also concerned about the State revenue projections and asked Department heads to identify potential areas for cuts of up to 10% of the budget. A 10% reduction in the DHHS budget cannot be achieved without a direct impact on children and families. Implementing sliding scale premiums for Healthy Kids Gold and introducing a resource/asset limit for Healthy Kids Silver are among the ideas proposed for potential cuts. Experience in other states indicates that these actions would result in decreased enrollment in the Healthy Kids program.

It is too early in the budget process to make any predictions about the outcome. If you would like to stay updated about the budget process, please send your e-mail address to Chris Rule at crule@nhhealthykids.com.

Legislative Update

GraniteCare, the DHHS plan to reform Medicaid, called for implementing health services accounts for working families in substitution of the current Healthy Kids insurance programs. House Bill (HB) 690 would have granted DHHS authority to implement health savings accounts but has been retained by the GraniteCare subcommittee of the House Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs Committee and will not be acted on this legislative session.

In the meantime, DHHS has initiated a process to engage Medicaid provider stakeholders in pursuing certain goals outlined in the GraniteCare plan. Strategies under consideration include connecting families with a medical home and providing various levels of care coordination. Representatives from the Pediatric Society, the Hospital Association, Bi-State Primary Care Association, NHHK and other stakeholder groups are actively involved in reviewing collaborative opportunities to move forward on initiatives to improve quality and reduce costs.

Other legislation of interest is HB 145 that would statutorily provide for NH Healthy Kids Corporation to be the program administrator for the State Children's Health Insurance Program. This legislation would amend the Healthy Kids act (RSA 126:H) which created NHHK. HB 145 has passed the House of Representatives and moves on to the State Senate.

Change in Healthy Kids Income Guidelines

Each April, New Hampshire updates the income guidelines for the Healthy Kids programs based on annual revisions to the federal poverty levels. The chart below reflects the updated income eligibility for the Healthy Kids programs. In im-

plementing the new guidelines, a number of enrolled families will qualify for a lower premium or free coverage. Families will be notified directly of any change in premium.

Monthly Income Limits Effective April 1, 2005				
	Healthy Kids Gold	Healthy Kids Silver		Healthy Kids Buy-In
Family Size	No Premium	\$25 per month per child \$100 family maximum	\$45 per month per child \$135 family maximum	\$115 per month per child No family maximum
1	\$1,476	\$1,477 - \$1,994	\$1,995 - \$2,393	\$2,394 - \$3,190
2	\$1,978	\$1,979 - \$2,673	\$2,674 - \$3,208	\$3,209 - \$4,277
3	\$2,481	\$2,482 - \$3,353	\$3,354 - \$4,023	\$4,024 - \$5,364
4	\$2,984	\$2,985 - \$4,032	\$4,033 - \$4,838	\$4,839 - \$6,450
5	\$3,486	\$3,487 - \$4,711	\$4,712 - \$5,653	\$5,654 - \$7,537
6	\$3,989	\$3,990 - \$5,390	\$5,391 - \$6,468	\$6,469 - \$8,624

NH Selected for Eligibility Process Improvement Collaborative

As the lead agency for New Hampshire's Covering Kids and Families Grant, NHHK was one of 14 grantees selected to participate in an Eligibility Process Improvement Collaborative sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. New Hampshire's selection was the result of a competitive process in which 35 grantees were invited to apply.

The goal of the Collaborative is to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of enrollment and retention in Medicaid and SCHIP. The yearlong project provides technical assistance to each state team in collecting and analyzing data, setting goals and testing strategies for improvement, and implementing or institutionalizing successful activities. A core element of the collaborative is to conduct small-scale tests that are quick and require few resources in order to evaluate how successful the change might be.

New Hampshire team members include:

Melody Braley – *Director of Field Operations, Division of Family Assistance*

Robin Magee – *Administrative Supervisor, Healthy Kids Central Eligibility Unit*

Valerie King – *State SCHIP Coordinator*

Jody Touzin – *NHHK Operations Coordinator*

Tricia Brooks – *NHHK CEO*

The first aim of the New Hampshire team is to reduce the percentage of Healthy Kids families who do not return their annual renewal application from 16.6% to less than 10%. This goal was selected because almost half of these cases are subsequently reopened after families receive the notice that their children have lost their Healthy Kids Gold coverage. Closing and re-opening cases is inefficient because it causes rework and gaps in coverage that can affect access to healthcare.

Healthy Kids Staff News

Five-Year Employee Recognition

NHHK is celebrating the five-year anniversary of two key staff members. Heather Hardy joined NHHK as a part-time customer service representative in late 1999. Heather quickly discovered an interest in information technology and demonstrated a natural aptitude for database management. Heather earned an Associates Degree in Computer Information Systems in December of 2004 and serves as NHHK's very accomplished Database Administrator.

Cristin Rojek is our senior ranking Customer Service Representative and specializes in facilitating the application process for customers. Given her vast experience with the Healthy Kids program, Cristin serves as a mentor to new customer service representatives.

Retiring

It is with mixed emotions that we announce that Carolyn Janes will be leaving State service in May. Carolyn is the Family Services Specialist who currently processes eligibility for applications submitted by community partners. After 30 years of doing what she loves, Carolyn plans to use her free time traveling and enjoying life.

New Communications Director

Colleen Cowette has joined the NHHK staff as Director of Communications and Development. Colleen has a bachelor's degree in Public Affairs/Journalism from Keene State College, and has over 15 years experience in the nonprofit field. She has worked as a reporter for the Union Leader, communications director for a Metro II United Way, and served as the founding executive director for a national non-profit organization for the past 10 years. Colleen is a native of New Hampshire and is happy to be working for an organization that plays such a vital role in the lives of many Granite Staters.

Portsmouth and Keene Healthy Kids Gold Cases Centralized at NHHK

In late 2002, the Division of Family Assistance moved toward creating a central unit at NHHK to process applications and manage cases specifically for families receiving only children's or pregnant women's medical coverage and no other assistance programs. Since then, the caseloads from eight of the twelve district offices were centralized. In December 2004, Healthy Kids Gold cases from the Portsmouth and Keene district offices were transferred to Healthy Kids Central. The Salem and Claremont district offices continue to process their own cases, although plans are to transfer Claremont cases in the near future.

The Healthy Kids Central Eligibility Unit is now responsible for 16,000 family cases. Family Service Specialists are responsible for managing, on average, over 1,000 cases each. The high caseload illustrates the efficiency of centralizing health coverage when compared with the average caseload of all other assistance programs of 350 in the District Offices. Medical coverage represents the highest application and enrollment. Centralization reduces work volume at the District Offices, allowing employees to concentrate on more administratively complex programs such as Food Stamps.

New Hampshire Healthy Kids thanks the following supporters for their generous contributions:

NH Charitable Fund	\$7,500
Citizens Bank (in-kind Donation of cash management And lockbox services)	\$8,500
Ramparts Fund of the Gr. Piscataqua Community Foundation	\$ 500
Individual Gifts	\$ 9,505

NHHK Welcomes New Provider Partners

NHHK healthcare provider partnerships reduce the cost of Healthy Kids Silver insurance by an estimated \$22 per month off standard group insurance rates. By sharing the cost of providing healthcare to Healthy Kids members, we are able to stretch limited State and Federal dollars to cover more kids. Our sincere appreciation goes out to these new provider financial partners:

Dr. Herb Meyer, D.O.
Terry M. Bennett, MD
Raymond King, MD
Dr's Paul & Sonneborn, PA
Northeast Surgical Care LLC
Deepak Sharma, MD
Dr. John P. Houde, MDDC
Conway Eye Care & Coos Eye Care
Fathi A. El-Kurd, P.A.
J. Misiewicz Family Practice
Dr. Denise M. Winings

Alton Family Medicine
David Fredenburg, MD, PA
Gregory M. McCarthy, MD
Patricia M. Pratt, MD
We Care Pediatrics
Personal Touch Home Health Aides
Orthopedic Professional Assoc.
Dr. Robert Gedachian, MD
Coastal Otolaryngology Assoc
Amoskeage Anesthesia, PLLC



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