



April 2005 Update Newborn Enrollment Project

Hello, everyone. In this Update, we report on:

- ***Over 40,500 “deemed eligible” infants have been enrolled into Medi-Cal for the first year of life through the improved CHDP Gateway since June 1, 2004—an average of 4,500 infants a month!!*** And thousands more each month get their coverage through the improved Newborn Referral Form procedures.
- **Fact Sheet** on new rules for infant enrollments through the CHDP Gateway and options for additional improvements
- **Prenatal Advantage Black Infant Health Project & Maternal Child and Adolescent Health Program** meeting in Foster City (San Mateo County)
- **Prenatal and Newborn Hospital Gateways** implementation
- **AB 624 (Montañez):** Simplifying enrollment at the CHDP Gateway into on-going coverage for children
- Governor’s health **budget** proposals

Over 4,500 infants a month get Medi-Cal at least until their first birthdays through the CHDP Gateway now—over 40,500 since June 2004--, plus thousands more do so using the Newborn Referral Form.

Starting June 1, 2004, the State Department of Health Services (DHS) at long last began asking the simple questions necessary to identify “deemed eligible” infants under age one year when they begin Medi-Cal coverage through the CHDP Gateway. As a result, an average of over 4,500 infants each month coming through the Gateway are keeping their Medi-Cal for the entire first year of life without having to submit a regular Medi-Cal application or any documentation. In contrast, other children applying through the CHDP Gateway lose their

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benefits in a maximum of two months if they do not submit a regular Medi-Cal or Healthy Families application with documentation of income, etc.

In addition, improvements to the Newborn Referral Form and process implemented throughout 2004 have also resulted in thousands more “deemed eligible” infants each month getting their Medi-Cal continuously for the first year of life without an application or documentation.

“Deemed eligible” infants are those whose mothers had Medi-Cal during the birth month and lived with the mother during the birth month: they do not have to apply for Medi-Cal, submit a birth certificate or a Social Security Number or any documentation at all to qualify for benefits for the entire first year of life. Infants whose moms had “restricted” benefits (that is, Medi-Cal only for pregnancy-related and emergency care) or whose moms are or were getting Medi-Cal along with CalWORKs, or who are in the process of applying for CalWORKs, all also qualify for “deemed eligibility.” In addition, as of February 2004, DHS recognizes that babies whose moms had Medi-Cal “Minor Consent” coverage qualify for “deemed eligibility.”

While the numbers of “deemed eligible” infants being enrolled through the CHDP Gateway and with the NRF are extremely encouraging—**over 40,500 to date!**-- more can and should be done to leave no eligible infant uninsured. For additional recommendations and information about how you can become involved, please see the attached Fact Sheet.

Prenatal Advantage Black Infant Health Project & Maternal Child and Adolescent Health Program, San Mateo County

The Prenatal Advantage Black Infant Health Project & Maternal Child and Adolescent Health Program held a stakeholders’ meeting on March 29 in Foster City to develop an action plan for tackling two priorities from the MCAH Five Years Needs Assessment report for San Mateo County that are particularly important for women of color, teens, and women with mental health and substance abuse problems: (1) increasing rates of prenatal care, and (2) decreasing rates of preterm birth. For more information about the report and the action plan, please contact **Ms. Bernestine Benton at (650) 363-7850**.

Prenatal and Newborn Hospital Gateways

The SB 24 Prenatal Gateway (Senator Liz Figueroa (D-Fremont), signed into law in 2003) presents an opportunity to help ensure that

women are covered by **Medi-Cal continuously throughout pregnancy, starting with the first prenatal care visit.**

This gateway would allow pregnant women to enroll into Medi-Cal with an electronic application sent to the state's "Single point of Entry" from the provider's office. **The gateway form would "count" as a woman's Medi-Cal application,** and she would keep her Medi-Cal under the Presumptive Eligibility Program for Pregnant Women until the county completes the final eligibility determination. Although some follow up by the county might still be required, a woman's Medi-Cal could no longer be automatically cut off for failure to submit a Medi-Cal application by the end of the month after the month of the prenatal care visit, as happens at present.

Consumer advocates and provider representatives have presented the State Department of Health Services with **proposals** for the implementing both the Prenatal and the Newborn Hospital Gateways, and so far the reception has been positive. After several promising starts, however, the implementation has been **delayed pending resolution of funding issues.**

The delays are especially frustrating, because, as the MCAH Five Years Needs Assessment report for San Mateo and many other counties have noted, **prenatal care is a major tool in preventing infant deaths and disabilities.** Even the Governor has acknowledged that "tragic infant deaths still occur far too frequently, especially in the African-American community" and that "**premature delivery and low birth-weight among African-American infants. . .are often a result of inadequate prenatal care and are the foremost contributing factors to disease and sickness among newborns.**" His Proclamation is attached.

For more information, please contact Lucy@Quacinella.com.

AB 624 (Montañez)

This bill, sponsored by MCHA, would simplify enrollment at the CHDP Gateway into on-going coverage for children over age one year. At present, such children may temporarily enroll into Medi-Cal from a doctor's office or clinic; to continue coverage beyond the end of the month after the month of the CHDP visit, the family must submit a regular application for Medi-Cal or Healthy Families. Many children are not making it through this barrier, and so are losing coverage in maximum of two months.

AB 624 would eliminate this enrollment barrier by giving families the **option of submitting a simplified application for Medi-Cal and**

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Healthy Families at the same time they enroll the child through the Gateway. For families choosing this option, the child's coverage would continue until the final eligibility determination is made.

The bill passed out of the Assembly Health Committee on April 12, 2004 with bi-partisan support. It goes to the Assembly Appropriations Committee next (no hearing date set yet). Attached is the Fact Sheet for AB 624, list of supporters to date, and a sample support letter.

For more information, please contact Lucy@Quacinella.com. And please e-mail Lucy a copy of your support letter.

Governor's Health Budget Proposal

Earlier this year, MCHA summarized the main proposals, many of which would impact pregnant women and children as part of Medi-Cal "Re-design"—contact us if you'd like a copy. Final action will not be taken until the "May Revision" of the Governor's budget proposals, based on April tax receipts, is issued. Please stay tuned.