

News from Maternal and Child Health Access



MCHA ADVOCACY GETS RESULTS:

Hundreds of Thousands of Newborns Enrolled in Health Coverage; More Improvements on the Way!!



As of March 1 of this year, **102,222** "deemed eligible" infants have been identified through the Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) Gateway, and hundreds of thousands more benefited from Newborn Referral Forms, to become enrolled into Medi-Cal for the **entire first year of life** as a result of MCHA advocacy.

Under federal and state law, infants born to a mother on Medi-Cal are "deemed eligible" for coverage for their first year of life, without having to submit an application. File notes from just one of MCHA's many newborn cases prior to the implementation of deemed eligibility illustrate how important the program is:

"No Medi-Cal for newborn premature twins. Mother has called Eligibility Worker for three months and phone is always busy. She sent in all documents – hospital letters, bills, rent receipt, check stubs, etc. ... One twin was still in NICU and Mom was afraid he wouldn't get the treatment he needed without Medi-Cal and was very stressed out about it."

The "deemed eligible infants" improvement to the CHDP Gateway relieves parents of such anxieties and risks. Infants are matched over the Internet to their mom's

Medi-Cal case when the infants have a CHDP exam, and a Medi-Cal card is immediately issued. This process was started in June 2004, after a lawsuit was filed to ensure that the special status of deemed eligibility was not ignored when a child received CHDP services. MCHA provided crucial testimony about infants who were going without coverage or care.

Earlier, MCHA sponsored legislation (1998) resulted in the use of the Newborn Referral Form throughout the state; this is a form that can be faxed to county Medi-Cal offices to notify Medi-Cal of the child's birth. Its use has resulted in thousands of "deemed eligible" infants each month getting their Medi-Cal continuously without an unnecessary application, birth certificate, or other documentation.

Similar approach should be adopted for children over age one year.

For children over one year old, the CHDP Gateway allows families to **start** the Medi-Cal and Healthy Families enrollment process over the Internet at doctor or clinic visits for preventive services under the CHDP program. These families are required to fill out and

(Continued on Page 3)

Dental Care for Pregnant Women: Preventing Preterm Birth



Following on the heels of successful legislation last fall to expand coverage of preventive dental care for low-income pregnant women (SB 377, Ortiz), MCH Access has been awarded funds from the UniHealth Foundation to publicize, provide technical assistance for and monitor implementation of the new dental benefits. Research over the last decade shows a link between gum disease in pregnant women, premature deliveries and low birth-weight newborns. The dental benefits – screening, cleaning and gum treatments – help to prevent gum

disease and to identify the need for additional treatment.

MCH Access will provide information, trainings, and technical assistance to women and to agencies seeking information about the benefits as well as policy feedback to key policymakers and stakeholders. We also expect to increase the number of pregnant women in Los Angeles County receiving these benefits over the course of the project.

MCH Access is pleased to have the opportunity to spread the word about the availability and the efficacy of dental benefits for pregnant

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women and to work with the UniHealth Foundation. UniHealth Foundation is a non-profit philanthropic organization whose mission is to support and facilitate activities that significantly improve the health and well being of individuals and communities within its service area. We thank them for their support of our work.

For more information about MCHA's Women and Infants Enrollment Project, which is made possible with the kind support of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, please contact Lucy@Quacinella.com or Liz Ramirez or Lynn Kersey at (213) 749-4261. 

Maternal and Child Health Access launches "mchaccess.org"!

At long last, MCH Access has its own website! The site features our training materials, including our popular income charts for health care programs, our program fact sheets and our easy-to-read chart illustrating the many health programs available in the state and Los Angeles County. We are proud to feature the artwork by MCHA clients and renowned Los Angeles artist Jose Ramirez "Imaginando Manaña" (Imagining Tomorrow) that many of you have admired in our office. You will be able to view our training calendar and sign up for trainings, preview our monthly meeting



speakers and topics, sign up for our Women and Infants Enrollment list serve and download mailings and newsletters. If you would like to know more about the remarkable success our clients have had breastfeeding, read about our Breastfeeding Support Group and its evaluation. Eventually we hope to show our Women's Art Collective's artwork so that you can actually purchase on line. Don't miss our changing client photos in the lower left hand corner as you peruse the website.

**Let us know what you think
and watch our website features
GROW!**

Advocacy Update:

Hundreds of Thousands... (Continued from Page 1)

submit a regular paper application within two months of the visit if they want their child's coverage to continue. If a family does not submit a follow-up application in a maximum of two months, the child's Medi-Cal is cut off at the end of the month after the CHDP visit.

How successful has the Gateway been in enrolling children over age one year into ongoing Medi-Cal and Healthy Families? While the numbers vary depending on the source, the State Department of Health Services, the federal Centers for Medicaid and Medicare (CMS), child health advocates and CHDP providers agree that most children over one year old who start temporary coverage with the CHDP visit do not make it to ongoing Medi-Cal or Healthy Families once Gateway coverage ends.

MCH Access is sponsoring legislation, AB 1948 (Montañez), to address the major problem of children dropping off CHDP Gateway coverage. The bill would simplify the enrollment process by condensing the two steps into one, so that the information for the follow-up application could be submitted over the Internet before the child even leaves the provider's office. DHS has estimated that **173,000 children each year** would be enrolled in Medi-Cal or Healthy Families as a result of this approach – that's over **40% of the 429,000 children who are eligible but not enrolled** (UCLA Feb 2005). The state would save about \$840,000 a year in administrative costs from this more efficient method of child health enrollment.

Pregnant women and newborns to benefit from similar approaches.

MCHA sponsored legislation to set up a similar electronic gateway for pregnant women to enroll directly from the provider's office into Medi-Cal for the duration of pregnancy and through the 60-day post-partum period has been in place since 2003, but has yet to be implemented. The same is true for a "newborn hospital gateway" that would allow "deemed eligible" infants to enroll in Medi-Cal for the first year of life before even leaving the hospital. Four foundations – The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, The California Endowment, The California HealthCare Foundation, and the Blue Shield Foundation of California – have generously responded to MCHA's request for assistance by joining together to provide the state with technical assistance to start the implementation process for the Prenatal and Newborn Hospital Gateways. The foundations' review will also assess options for integrating these two new gateways with other enrollment systems.



In November, an exciting initiative measure will be on the ballot to insure all California children with family incomes up to 300% of the federal poverty level. MCHA's work on improving the systems for enrolling the hundreds of thousands of uninsured California children who qualify under the existing rules for Medi-Cal and Healthy Families is a necessary complement to the expansion efforts, and we are proud to be part of the growing movement for universal children's health insurance.

For more information, contact Lucy Quacinella, Project Director for MCH Access's Women and Infants Enrollment Project, lucy@sbcbglobal.net or (415) 348-6336 or Liz Ramirez or Lynn Kersey at (213) 749-4261.

Wish Lists { Our United Way donation number is 595702 for workplace giving. }

- Holiday gifts for 100-150 families, such as blankets and children's toys.
- New or gently used maternity clothing
- New or gently used baby/children's clothing
- New or gently used bedding/towels
- New or gently used slings or other baby carriers
- Household items
- Educational toys, children's books in Spanish and English, art supplies, school supplies
- Beds (our clients sleep on the floor)
- Childproofing items: locks, table corners, cabinet closures, plug covers
- Yarn for knitting, craft supplies, fabric or gift certificates to stores with these items
- Small color printers
- Storage site for donated furniture (near downtown)
- Office supplies: paper, toner, pens, staples, you name it.
- Professional photography for our office, brochures and newsletters.

For our offices...

- Small round office tables
- Computers
- Digital camera

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