

Texas CHIP Coalition Minutes
Friday, April 20, 2007 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
May Owen Conference Rm., 10th Floor
Texas Medical Association

Attendees: Anne Dunkelberg, CPPP; Parisa Fatehi, CPPP; Kit Abney Spelce, Insure-a-Kid; Jill Johnson, Texans Care for Children; Lynn Hudson, C-NPA; Bee Morehead, Texas IMPACT; Julia Marsden, League of Women Voters; Morgan Walthall, March of Dimes; Michelle Romero, Texas Medical Association; Susan Craven, Texans Care for Children; Jeanne Stamp, Texas Homeless Education Office; Miryam Bujanda, Methodist Health Care Ministries; Jeff Miller, Advocacy, Inc.; Jennifer Carr, Catholic Charities; Carrie Kroll, Texas Pediatric Society; Helen Kent Davis, Texas Medical Association; Robin Butler, Children's Hospital Association of Texas

Via conference call: Anat Kelman, Children's Defense Fund; Julia Easley, Children's Medical Center Dallas; Robin Greer, Superior Health Plan; Sarah Hooper, Denton County Health Department

Anne Dunkelberg called the meeting to order at 11:40 a.m.

Ms. Dunkelberg has received an e-mail from the parents of Landon Parker, a child who participated in the Medicaid 40th birthday event, saying that he is battling acute Crohn's Disease and has just been released from Children's Hospital of Austin after a five week hospitalization. The family is asking that Landon be kept in everyone's thoughts.

Medicaid Eligibility

Ms. Dunkelberg stated that she received e-mails on two families that have experienced Medicaid eligibility problems within the last few weeks.

The first was from a family that was clearly within the income guidelines for Medicaid but were notified they were over the eligibility requirement. In addition to the income notification letter, the family also received a letter addressed incorrectly to someone not living at their house asking for missing information. In trying to resolve the matter, the mother had to wait an hour on the phone to speak with a Spanish speaking representative and was told that her application was still being processed even though it had been over 45 days. Barbara Best has asked HHSC to intervene.

The second case involved a woman who wrote the name of her caseworker on the envelope in which her application was mailed. She was told that because she wrote her caseworker's name on the envelope the application had gotten lost and she would have to start the process over again.

Ms. Dunkelberg stated that renewal rates for CHIP have also been in the low 60's for the past two months. That, combined with the recent Medicaid eligibility problems show that even though restorative legislation may be enacted there is still an eligibility system in place that is not working.

Ms. Davis added that she has heard from several physicians that they are seeing kids falling off the Medicaid rolls.

HB109

Ms. Dunkelberg reported that HB109 has been referred to Senate Finance. The bill will not be set for a hearing until Lt. Governor Dewhurst positions himself on twelve months continuous eligibility and communicates with the Senate leaders involved. It is expected that he will offer a compromise on the twelve months. Ms. Dunkelberg stated that the Texas CHIP Coalition as a group will maintain the position of no compromise on twelve months, and that while every organization should push the twelve months it is up to the groups on how they individually want to move forward in communications with the Lt. Governor and Senate offices. If a proposal is offered by the Lt. Governor there will need to be dialogue and analysis by the coalition to make sure that it is a thoughtful compromise and provide input on any downsides to the ideas presented.

Ms. Moorhead stated that Texas Impact and Methodist Health Care Ministries just delivered ten thousand postcards to Dewhurst calling for CHIP restoration as well as oversized postcards to every member of the Senate requesting that they keep HB109 moving.

Ms. Carr stated that all of the bishops with Catholic Charities have agreed to call their Senators in support of twelve months continuous coverage. She added that this is the only phone call they have been willing to make this session; all other advocacy has been in the form of letter writing.

Ms. Marsden updated that the League of Women Voters of Texas also hand-delivered an advocacy paper last Wednesday that addressed moving forward to restore twelve months eligibility. Phone calls were also made to Senator Zaffirini's office to show support of 12 months continuous for Medicaid.

Ms. Dunkelberg added that Senator Zaffirini has expressed some interest in championing performance fixes for eligibility and may be interested in adding some language in a substitute for her SB266. The language may incorporate some of what had been contained in HB740 including no gaps in coverage as children move between CHIP and Medicaid, non-termination of coverage if the agency is behind in processing applications and the agency must work harder to obtain missing information. With twelve months continuous for Medicaid carrying a large fiscal note, Zaffirini is also interested in proposing a simplified review process at six months for Children's Medicaid to help address performance issues.

C.S.H.B.740 has stalled in committee because the LBB placed a 38 million dollar fiscal note on the bill due to increased CHIP enrollment, not Medicaid enrollment. Ms. Dunkelberg is following up with the LBB on their rationale for this note.

Ms. Davis said that TMA was in the process of putting together a packet of all of the op-eds, editorials, flyers and other correspondence that had been directed to the House in support of HB109. The packets are scheduled to be passed out to Senate members next Tuesday. An open letter to the Senate was also being developed that calls for support of the bill and assistance in moving it forward. She added that next week is "Cover the Insured Week" and would be a great angle to use with the media in discussing CHIP restoration.

Ms. Dunkelberg said that she will send out an e-mail early next week with instructions on messaging on setting HB109 in committee. She wants a little time to see if the Lt. Governor comes forward with his proposal. Ms. Dunkelberg will also send out via the listserv the CHIP disenrollment by House district chart used in the House floor debate, a list of the CHIP disenrollment by Senate district and the recent CPPP Policy Page detailing the Rockefeller/Snowe CHIP Reauthorization bill.

Other Issues

Ms. Walthall inquired about SB10 and where everyone stands on the bill.

Ms. Davis stated that TMA supports the bill. The amendments they were in support of – HSAs being voluntary and applying only to adults, EPSDT language being part of the stated benefit package for kids and opt-out being voluntary with education offered to those wishing to opt-out, were all adopted. The only exception was in regards to CSHCN benefit packages but the request was made that HHSC put together a robust stakeholder process to design those plans.

Ms. Dunkelberg concurred adding that her concern is that there is some unclear language and could open the doors for different tailored benefit packages for different populations and areas. Since this was a low cost-savings bill, her initial fears that the bill would be benefit cuts masquerading as reform have been tempered.

The next CHIP Coalition meeting will be held on Friday, May 18th, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. at TMA, 401 W. 15th Street in the Thompson Auditorium, 1st Floor.

With no other agenda items the CHIP Coalition meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.