

Texas CHIP Coalition Minutes
Friday, March 23, 2007 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Catholic Charities of Central Texas

Attendees: Anne Dunkelberg, CPPP; Kit Abney Spelce, Insure-a-Kid; Jill Johnson, Texans Care for Children; Jodi Smith, Texans Care for Children; Beth Schlechter, Indigent Care Collaboration; Kitty Allen, Harris County Hospital District; Therese Ruffing, Consultant; Anna Garcia, Catholic Charities of Central Texas; Lynn Hudson, C-NPA; Bee Morehead, Texas IMPACT; Julia Marsden, League of Women Voters; Morgan Walthall, March of Dimes; Ed Berger, Seton Health Plan; Helen Kent Davis, Texas Medical Association; Robin Butler, Children's Hospital Association of Texas

Via conference call: Julia Easley, Children's Medical Center Dallas; Barbara Best, Children's Defense Fund; Candice Spikes, CHA of Texas; Sarah Hooper, Denton County Health Department

Anne Dunkelberg called the meeting to order at 11:10 a.m.

SCHIP Reauthorization

Ms. Dunkelberg provided an update on the federal SCHIP reauthorization noting that they are continuing to debate the Senate budget resolution. Sen. Cornyn had filed an amendment that proposed prohibiting CHIP funds to cover parents, prohibiting the full CHIP match for states that take CHIP over 200% FPL and taking away the promise of \$50 billion in new funds but that amendment has been defeated. Ms. Dunkelberg stated that there was \$50 billion over the next five years in both the House and Senate resolutions so if passed, there will be enough money for the states to enroll their eligible but not enrolled and fund expansion programs. She added that it will be important to watch to ensure they don't take funds away from other worthwhile programs to offset the costs for expanding SCHIP funding.

HB109

Ms. Dunkelberg reported on the status of HB109 noting that a point of order had been sustained on the floor last Monday. Recent prediction from Rep. Turner was that it would be set for vote a week from Monday. Rep. Turner asked that calls still be made to the Calendars Committee members to request the bill be moved quickly to the floor for a vote. Amendment attempts will be made from both Democrats and Republicans; Republican amendments that Ms. Dunkelberg is aware of include adding citizenship documentation requirements, strip-back to 6 months eligibility, continuation of the 90 day delay, elimination of 90 day wait for newborns but continued for rest of the population and denial of CHIP to any child with parent access to "reasonably affordable" insurance.

Ms. Morehead questioned if a plan of action was being developed to garner public testimony for the Senate side. In response, Ms. Dunkelberg asked Ms. Best to update the group on recent senate visits CDF had facilitated.

Ms. Best stated that she had brought in five high-level Houston business leaders on Tuesday. On the House side they met with Rep. John Davis and Troy Alexander from the Speaker's office. In the Senate they met with Sen. Nelson, Sen. Ogden and Lt. Governor Dewhurst. The Lt. Governor

was very interested in policy changes for the asset test and the 90 day wait but feels that the 6 month coverage should remain in place as it re-enforces parental responsibility. Ms. Best said all of the visits had gone well and the offices had been very impressed with the business and Chambers of Commerce support for CHIP.

Ms. Dunkelberg stated that she would follow-up with Julia Easley about possibly arranging similar visits for Dallas business leaders.

Ms. Davis reported that the TMA communications shop had called all the major papers yesterday to discuss CHIP editorials. Almost all of the op-ed writers stated that the paper was receiving in a ratio of 2 to 1 more letters from readers who were anti-CHIP than from CHIP advocates and that more correspondence was needed from CHIP supporters in order to continue to write the pieces. Ms. Dunkelberg stated that CPPP, Texans Care for Children and CDF are currently working together to get op-eds, signed by an area physician, out to the smaller market papers. Discussion strategy was held among the group on additional ways to maximize more Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor being sent to papers across the state. Ms. Dunkelberg stated that she would also follow-up with the San Antonio groups to make sure they were aware of statements made by one of their local op-ed writers to generate additional pro-CHIP correspondence to him.

Ms. Davis said that a TMA physician had been approached by Sen. Ogden asking for his opinion on a simplified review for CHIP. The simplified review would consist of a completely pre-populated form in which the applicant would update any changed information, sign and return with a current pay stub. Ms. Davis said that many members of the Senate still think that the 2 page application is entirely pre-populated and all the applicant has to do is sign.

Ms. Dunkelberg noted that part of Dr. Peterson's testimony at the March 1st Human Services hearing addressed the complications with completing the CHIP application. Ms. Davis said that she would follow-up with Dr. Peterson to obtain a copy of that presentation and would also work to get an actual application that was sent to a family where the information could be blacked out but allow the legislators to see what little was pre-populated. Packets will be made up of both items and distributed to Senate members.

Ms. Marsden inquired where CHIP was with appropriations. Ms. Dunkelberg responded that allowances had been made in both the House and Senate budgets for HB109. To offset the costs, the House took equal dollars out of Medicaid line items and only put one year's worth of dollars in exceptional items for growth stating that it will go back in conference at a later date to add the rest if needed. If HB109 is passed, there is funding but work will still have to be done to get a bill passed that is funded for 12 months.

Ms. Allen added that due to an appropriations bill rule change they must "cut" within the same article when they need to pull funds; they cannot move funds from one article to another.

CHIP Birthday Celebration

Discussion was held on the CHIP birthday celebration scheduled for early April. Ms. Dunkelberg questioned possibly tying in the release of Barbara Best's Family Stories report and asked Ms. Best for an update on the report.

Ms. Best responded that a proof of the report, which includes profiles and pictures of 30 kids that have lost coverage, had been sent out to the Insure Texas Kids listserv. It was expected that the finished report would be ready that day from the printer. It was scheduled for Rep. Ellen Cohen's Chief of Staff to distribute to the Capitol offices on Monday. Ms. Best is interested in doing something at the Capitol to announce the release as well as regional press conferences to get the families on TV to discuss their plight.

After a round table discussion, the decision was made to move the CHIP birthday celebration from Wednesday, April 4th to the morning of Monday, April 2nd, the likely date that HB109 would go before the House for vote. Packets that contain a copy of the Family Stories report, an executive summary of the CPPP comparison report on other states' eligibility policies for CHIP and Medicaid, the TCC/ITK agenda and message on HB109, will be delivered to each of the legislator's offices along with cookies. It was also planned that Monday through Wednesday of the following week, April 9th – 11th, a display of the Family Stories pictures, along with some written text, will be set up in the Capitol. Texans Care for Children already had space reserved and offered part of their area for the display. This will allow for additional momentum as the bill is hopefully passed out of the House and moves to the Senate for debate.

Ms. Ruffing stressed that it was important to reinforce business support and all were in agreement. Ms. Davis will work with the TMA printshop to create a stand-out cover to the packet that will include the area Chamber of Commerce support statements along with the TCC/ITK agenda points. Chamber statements would also be part of the Capitol display the following week.

Ms. Dunkelberg will follow up with TCC organizations about funding for the event and will also provide via the listserv details on the time and distribution point for the event after delivery times have been confirmed.

Other Issues

Mr. Berger asked if action needed to be taken at this point on 12 months eligibility for Medicaid.

Ms. Dunkelberg replied that it was important to speak out against the myth that CHIP is for working families and Medicaid is a welfare program and to bring up the TCC agenda points on Medicaid. In addition, if traction is gained on the streamlined review process layout in Naishtat's HB740 to be ready to back it. She added that Barbara Best included in the Family Stories report the dismal timeliness of Medicaid application processing.

The next CHIP Coalition meeting will be held on Friday, April 20th, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. at TMA, 401 W. 15th Street in the Thompson Auditorium, 1st Floor. Any agenda items or listserv items to be sent out may be e-mailed to Anne Dunkelberg.

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