

# Outreach

## TO UNINSURED CHILDREN

### Recent Foundation Initiatives

One of the most pressing issues of concern to grantmakers is the number of children living without health insurance. In 1997, nearly 11 million children were uninsured. Children without health insurance are less likely than insured children to have a usual source of care, are more likely to experience barriers to care, and are less likely to seek preventive care or illness-related care even when it is medically necessary. Without insurance, children may be more at risk to become ill, remain ill, and have higher future health care costs. This *Issue Focus* discusses the variety of ways foundations can help to identify children who are eligible for state-funded health insurance and enroll them in the appropriate program.

#### THE ISSUE

Since the mid-1980s, state and federal policy makers have expanded Medicaid eligibility to children in families previously not eligible. Most recently, enactment of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) provided states with \$23.8 billion over five years to provide health insurance to uninsured children living in families with incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. To qualify for CHIP funds, states must submit an implementation plan that takes one of three approaches: expands the current state Medicaid program, develops an entirely new health insurance program, or some combination of these.

Expanding or adding new programs does not necessarily translate into greater enrollments. As many as 7 million children who are eligible for Medicaid and other health coverage programs remain unenrolled. In recognition of this fact, CHIP funding comes with two outreach requirements. States submitting CHIP plans must outline how they will inform and enroll eligible children into CHIP as well as other public or private child health insurance programs. States must also submit a plan for the coordination of CHIP with other existing public programs providing health insurance to children. Further challenging the states' planning for CHIP is the requirement that they develop a process to ensure that children eligible for Medicaid will not be enrolled in CHIP. In addition, the President of the United States recently cir-

culated an executive memorandum to the Social Security Administration and the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Labor, and Treasury establishing a multi-agency effort to enroll uninsured children. The memorandum requires these agencies to establish their own outreach efforts. It also encourages them to enter into inter-agency collaborations in order to simplify their application and information dissemination procedures.

#### WHAT GRANTMAKERS ARE DOING

The roles of public-private partnerships and privately funded initiatives are important complements to state efforts to find and enroll eligible children. To date, nearly 40 foundations are funding outreach initiatives that identify uninsured children who are eligible but not enrolled in public insurance programs. While the activities of these foundations vary in terms of their scope and size, they all have the potential to reduce significantly the number of uninsured children. Foundation-funded initiatives tend to take one of four forms:

- working directly with states in developing and implementing outreach efforts. Although foundations may fund a variety of projects in conjunction with their state governments, one foundation in particular, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is working with every state under its initiative, *Covering Kids: A National Health Access Initiative For Low-income, Uninsured Children*. With \$47 million, Covering Kids will support up to 51 state-local coalitions by making grants in the range of \$500,000 to \$1 million, depending on the size of the state, potential impact, degree of innovation, breadth of coalitions, and the scope of activities proposed. Each state-local coalition is expected to design both a statewide project and two or three community-based pilots in communities with a significant number of uninsured children who are eligible for coverage under existing programs but remain unenrolled. At least half of the funds must support activities in the pilot communities.

- funding community-based outreach efforts. The majority of foundation-funded outreach initiatives are community-based projects. The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation, for example, has made six grants totaling \$300,000 for the development and expansion of several community-based coalitions that will reach out to eligible children through its *Seek-Find-Enroll: Reducing the Number of Uninsured Children in Michigan* initiative. One of those coalitions will train volunteers, referred to as community ambassadors, to go door-to-door in several Detroit area neighborhoods to identify eligible children and refer their parents to CHIP outreach staff for one-to-one help with the application process. Other examples of community-based approaches to outreach include the Bedford Community Health Foundation, Inc., of Bedford County, VA and The Duke Endowment of North Carolina. Each has supported efforts to hire nurses who will both identify children who are eligible for state health insurance programs, and provide technical assistance to the parents of eligible children to help enroll them.
- funding research, policy analysis, and technical assistance to state or local communities for their outreach efforts. The Commonwealth Fund has supported a variety of projects in the area of research and policy analysis including a grant to Global Strategy Group, Inc. to conduct focus groups to determine why New York state is failing to reach eligible children. Commonwealth has also provided a grant to the Medical and Health Research Association of New York City, Inc. to test the state's outreach and enrollment methods for the estimated 75 percent of New York City's low-income, uninsured children who are eligible for but not participating in either Medicaid or the state Child Health Plus (CHP) programs.
- working in collaboration with other foundations to develop state or even locally based outreach projects. The Jewish Healthcare Foundation and the Consumer Health Coalition in Pittsburgh together have spearheaded a public-private partnership for a community-wide outreach program to enroll all children in southwestern Pennsylvania eligible for free health insurance. With additional funding provided by The Birmingham Foundation, the Heinz Endowment, the McCune Foundation, the Maurice Falk Medical Fund, and the Staunton Farm Foundation, the campaign will develop a toll-free information help-line, produce grassroots advertising, provide special assistance for families needing help with applications, train community-based organizations to connect families to health insurance, and develop a tracking system to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign strategy. Other collaborations include that formed among the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton, the Austin-Bailey Health & Wellness Foundation, the Deuble Family Foundation, and the Hoover Foundation, which together will contribute part of the matching funds for Stark County, Ohio to receive state funding for an extensive outreach campaign. The Stark County Department of Health Services will

contribute the remainder of the match, for activities that include a coordinated mass-media campaign, direct marketing to potential customers, and the development and distribution of consumer education and training materials.

Grantmakers In Health (GIH) has attempted to compile a complete listing of the outreach work of foundations to identify eligible children and enroll them in their state health insurance programs. We are very interested in learning about others as we develop our information resource center and database. If you are interested in learning more about the work of foundations to provide outreach to uninsured children, or if you would like to include your foundation's work in our resource center, please contact Malcolm Williams of the GIH staff at 202/452-8331, or [mwilliams@gih.org](mailto:mwilliams@gih.org).

## RESOURCES

### SELECTED GRANTMAKERS:

Bedford Community Health Foundation, Inc.  
Contact: Roger Henderson  
(540/586-5292)

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation  
Contact: Nora Maloy  
(313/225-8205)

The Commonwealth Fund  
Contact: David Sandman  
(212/606-3845)

The Duke Endowment  
Contact: Gene Cochran  
(704/376-0291)

Jewish Healthcare Foundation  
Contact: Geoffrey Webster  
(412/594-2558)

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
Contact: Vicki C. Grant, Southern Institute on Children and Families  
(803/779-2607)

Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton  
Victoria Conley  
(330/454-5800)

### SELECTED REPORTS:

Carpenter, Mary Brecht, and Laura Kavanagh, *Outreach and the State Children's Health Insurance Program: Helping States Enroll Children and Assure Access to Care* (Arlington, VA: National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health, undated).

Cornell, Emily V., *How States Can Increase Enrollment in the State Children's Health Insurance Program* (Washington, DC: National Governors' Association, 1998).

Ross, Donna Cohen, *New Federal Funds for Medicaid Outreach and Enrollment Activities* (Washington, DC: Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, 1998).

Selden, Tomas M., Jessica S. Banthin, and Joel W. Cohen, "Medicaid's Problem Children: Eligible But Not Enrolled," *Health Affairs* (May/June 1998).