

Ten Ways Schools Can Promote New Health Insurance Opportunities

As millions of Americans become eligible for health insurance in 2014, schools can play a vital role in making sure people know about how to get coverage and how to get help applying. From the youngest preschoolers to teens in high school, America's students are better able to excel when they have the health care services they need. And, when parents and caregivers are healthy, families are more stable and able to support their children's growth and development. Getting health insurance is a key step to being able to get healthy and stay healthy.

Beginning in 2014, many people who do not have health insurance will be able to get it, and many may also qualify for help that makes coverage easier to afford. The new Health Insurance Marketplace is the place to find information about how to apply for coverage, including Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Open enrollment begins October 1, 2013; as always, individuals may apply for Medicaid or CHIP at any time.

Here's how schools can contribute to the outreach effort:

Spread the Word

- 1. State Departments of Education, school boards, school administrators' associations and others can keep schools and school districts informed about health insurance opportunities.**

Work with state health agencies, such as the Health Insurance Marketplace and the Medicaid agency, to get current, reliable information for families on eligibility and on how to get help applying.

- 2. Offer information about health insurance opportunities in schools and on school websites.**

Display consumer materials from HealthCare.gov explaining the basics of Medicaid, CHIP and coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplace. Place them where parents gather and where they wait to meet with principals, teachers, school counselors, the school nurse or other personnel. Post the **Health Insurance Marketplace** widget on your school and school district websites. Put eligibility and enrollment information in newsletters and other take-home items.

- 3. Include health coverage messages when talking with students and their families about health.**

Talk about the availability of health insurance whenever school staff is focusing attention on a child's health — when you are providing immunizations, conducting dental and vision screenings, or discussing physical or behavioral health issues with families. Families may not realize children and adults may qualify and they may not know how to apply.

- 4. Build on school enrollment procedures.**

A school can add a question about the child's health insurance status to enrollment forms and emergency contact forms, and follow up with families that say that their child is uninsured. Include a check-box on applications for free and reduced-price school meals so parents can give permission for the School Lunch Program to share application information with Medicaid and CHIP to help the child enroll in coverage. Parents and older siblings may also be uninsured, so provide health insurance information for all family members.

5. Focus on health coverage opportunities at special events.

Invite local experts to speak at PTA meetings, back-to-school activities and other events to share news about health coverage opportunities and how to enroll.

6. Pay close attention to teens, who are less likely to have coverage than younger children.

Connect teens to coverage when they visit school-based clinics. Ask coaches to make sure parents know about available insurance that offers broader benefits than some plans targeted to school athletes. Catch parents' attention when teens sign up for driver education and other activities that require a parent's consent.

Help Students and Their Families Apply for Health Coverage

7. Partner with community organizations that offer help applying.

Connect families with community health centers and health departments that are likely to be able to offer application assistance. Helpers that come to your school may have laptops, or schools may be able to make a computer station available. All states will have online applications, and people also will be able to apply by phone, by mail or in person.

8. Take advantage of available training so that school nurses, school social workers and others can offer families help applying.

Have trained staff members, especially in large schools and school districts, so families can enroll at school and can get help when it's time to renew.

9. Support parents and others who can apply on their own.

Make the school's computer lab available to parents who do not have a computer or Internet access at home, but are able to apply without help.

Promote Promising Practices

10. Share successful ideas.

Collect strategies schools are using to inform families about health insurance and to help get them enrolled. Present in statewide training sessions. Include ideas in school handbooks and consider making them standard procedure.

For more information about the Marketplace

Visit HealthCare.gov, or call the Health Insurance Marketplace Call Center at **1-800-318-2596**. TTY users should call 1-855-889-4325.

Visit Marketplace.cms.gov for Marketplace widgets and badges and other partner materials.