

Health—E Connections

Utah Family Voices Health Information Center

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Dear Friends,

As 2007 comes to an end, we have much to be thankful for. We also have much to ponder...

2008 is a big year for a lot of issues, including health care. As you spend time with your family and friends this holiday season, we ask you to think about what you would like to see happen for their health coverage. What changes will affect you and your loved ones? We at Utah Family Voices will do our best to keep you updated on the latest in Federal and State healthcare issues, and it is your job to educate yourself with this information. This month we highlight the Healthcare proposal put together by The Salt Lake City Chamber of Commerce and United Way of Utah. Happy reading!

For feedback or suggestions, please contact tinap@utahparentcenter.org

Do you have affordable health care coverage? Have rising costs put a financial strain on your family? Did you know Utah is looking at healthcare reform?

Unexpected medical bills can eat up your savings account or even set you on the road to bankruptcy, even if you do have health insurance. But as many as 300,000 - 400,000 Utahns do not have health insurance at all, according to recent estimates. Individual policies are expensive, and costs are rising for employers as well as "some no longer offer health coverage due to rising premiums."

Uninsured Utahns face tough choices every day. And when medical bills go unpaid, costs rise for everyone. The Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce have come together to create a proposal on this issue.

Problem: We face an economic and humanitarian imperative to reform Utah's health system. Costs are escalating beyond individual, employer and taxpayer capacity. Too many people lack health insurance, incentives are misaligned, and the system is unfair. This broken system is unsustainable and will ultimately threaten our economic competitiveness as a state and nation. The nature of these challenges is that they cannot be addressed in isolation, or in partial fashion. Costs cannot be controlled unless incentives are properly structured for both individuals and market stakeholders. Incentives cannot be properly aligned unless everyone has basic coverage and markets are fair and transparent. Individuals cannot afford coverage and overall system costs cannot be sustained without sharing responsibility for insurance costs on the front end rather than on the more expensive and least effective back end.

Objective: To make health care more affordable (cost), improve health care outcomes (quality), and increase health coverage for the uninsured (access). We define success as passage of comprehensive health system reform legislation in 2008 that creates a multi-year framework to contain health care costs, ensure access and enhance quality.

Proposal: We recommend a conservative, business-minded approach to health system reform that relies primarily on the private market, encourages personal responsibility, and maximizes consumer choice while creating strong incentives for efficiency and quality.

Proposed solutions:

- Encourage personal responsibility and the use of a competitive market to control costs and improve health care outcomes
- Establish an essential health care benefit structure that is a continuum of services that becomes more expensive as treatments become more elective
- Establish a health benefits commission to determine benefits within the essential benefits package and to resolve disputes
- Create a health insurance exchange that connects individuals to insurance policies (similar to how a stock market connects investors with companies). In the exchange, insurance policies can be purchased with pre-tax dollars (a benefit that not everyone enjoys today) and can move with you and your family as your job or other circumstances change
- Reduce costs associated with charity care by requiring individuals to have health coverage and providing financing for those with limited incomes and/or those whose employers do not provide benefits

To read more about this proposal go to uwfinancialstability.org

The Family Opportunity Act

The Family Opportunity Act helps families with disabled children to stay together and stay employed, without losing their access to appropriate health care for special needs. In the 109th Congress, it passed the House and the Senate as a provision of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, which was signed into law by President Bush on February 8, 2006. The Family Opportunity Act was modeled after the "Ticket to Work" or Work Incentives Act (P.L.106-170), which became law in the 106th Congress. To learn more about The Family Opportunity Act, go to: <http://www.ncsl.org/statefed/health/FamOpAct.htm>

Our Health-E Connections headline article last month focused on The Family Opportunity Act. The Family Opportunity Act is a piece of legislation that would change the lives of families of children and youth with special health care needs. Family Voices supports the Family Opportunity Act and hope that all of you will take a look and see for yourself what it is all about. When this is presented to Utah Legislature we hope to see you all there in support of The Family Opportunity Act.

More to come on when and where...

Give the gift of your voice and opinion!

Don't forget, December is a great month to contact your legislative officials to talk about the issues that are important to you. A letter or call is always a great way to start!

To find your legislative officials, go to the Family Voices Legislative Action Center:

<http://capwiz.com/familyvoices/home/>

UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation to Offer Medical Assistance Grants to Families Nationwide

Minneapolis (Jan. 24, 2007) — The UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation (UHCCF) is now offering support to meet the needs of children nationwide with assistance grants for medical services not fully covered by health insurance

Parents and caretakers across the country will be eligible to apply for grants of up to \$5,000 for health care services that will help improve their children's health and quality of life. Examples of the types of medical services covered by UHCCF grants include: speech therapy, physical therapy and psychotherapy sessions; medical equipment such as wheelchairs, braces, hearing aids and eyeglasses; and orthodontia and dental treatments.

The UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation has already helped more than 375 families and provided nearly \$1 million in financial assistance," said UHCCF president Matt Peterson. "We are excited about the expansion of the program, and look forward to the opportunity to help many more children access health care services that will enhance their health and quality of life

To be eligible for UHCCF grants, children must be 16 years of age or younger. Families must meet economic guidelines, reside in the United States and be covered by a commercial health insurance plan.

"Receiving a grant from the UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation changed our lives," said Karen Lucas, whose son Quinn required extensive therapy as a result of spina bifida, a congenital condition. "With the grant, we were able to take advantage of a special program that provides the right therapies and support needed for Quinn's specific medical needs. That program has opened up a whole new world for him, and the grant from the UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation has eased the financial burden on our family."

The UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation is a public charity with its own board of directors, operating independently from UnitedHealthcare. While UHCCF continues to be supported principally by UnitedHealth Group and its employees, individual and corporate donations to help provide assistance are deeply appreciated. Donors can designate funds to be used in the region where they reside; otherwise unspecified donations are divided equally among the regions

About UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation: The UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that strives to enhance either the clinical condition or quality of life of children who have health care needs not fully covered by commercial insurance. The Foundation provides grants of up to \$5,000 for costs associated with medical services and equipment. Foundation funding is provided by contributions from employees of UnitedHealth Group as well as individuals and corporations. To donate or learn more, please visit www.uhccf.org <<http://www.uhccf.org>> .



Clinton Stresses Commitment To Autism

By Jennifer Jacobs for the desmoinesregister.com. <http://tinyurl.com/35eaen>

Sioux City, Ia. - People with autism would see \$700 million a year in spending for more research for cures and services if Hillary Clinton is elected, the Democratic presidential candidate said today.

"It's time we had a government and a president that recognized the seriousness of autism and addressed it head-on," Clinton told a crowd of more than 300 in Sioux City, a town evenly divided between Democratic, Republican and independent voters. "We can help people with autism live rich and full lives."

The alarming increase in autism in America was the topic of Clinton's first post-Thanksgiving visit to Iowa, a state where she plans to devote much more time between now and Christmas.

Clinton said she would like to see an autism task force, grants for services for adults, teacher training, and a new national assistance center.

The number of people with autism is growing far faster than the options for treatment, Clinton said. She said she wants to invest more on tracking the possible causes of autism. "I believe there are environmental triggers," she said.

Clinton said people are exposed to thousand of chemicals. "They are in the carpets. They are in the paints. They are in the clothes we wear," she said.

Democrat Sally Pederson told the audience that when her 24-year-old son, Ronald Autry, was diagnosed when he was 2, she'd never heard of autism. The number of diagnoses have jumped from 1 in 10,000 in 1993 to 1 in 150 in 2007, said said Pederson, a former lieutenant governor of Iowa. Ronald now has his own apartment and a job and recently purchased his first car.

"Thank you for your leadership," said Pederson, who intends to caucus for Clinton.

Clinton's plan would include a task force, that would include people from the autism community, that would be charged with identifying gaps in evidence-based biomedical research, behavioral treatments, and services for children and adults with autism.

A grant program would offer money for adults with autism, including for job training, housing, and transition services for young people leaving school.

She would expand access to care immediately after diagnosis. Intensive intervention as soon as possible following diagnosis yields the best outcomes, but too often, children have to wait for months, Clinton said.

There would be more money for school districts to provide teacher training. "A lot of teachers get no training whatsoever," Clinton said.

And the national technical assistance center would be a clearinghouse of information about autism treatments, interventions and services. The information would accessible to the public through the Internet.

One of Clinton's on-stage guests in Sioux City was Jane Seely, whose daughter Sara Seely has autism. The younger Seely asked Clinton a question about pollution and deforestation during a campaign stop earlier this week in Vinton.

Jane Seely said Sara hopes to be invited to Washington, D.C. if Clinton is elected.

"You will be invited to the inauguration, no doubt about it," Clinton answered, laughing.



Check Out these LINKS!

♥ Utah Clicks!

You can apply for health care programs such as Medicaid, CHIP, WIC, Early Intervention and CSHCN online at www.utahclicks.org this is a very simple, one step way to apply for all state services.

♥ Special Needs Project – a unique disability bookstore

<http://www.specialneeds.com/>

♥ Special Needs Answers – a community resource provided by the academy of special needs planners

<http://www.specialneedsanswers.com/>

Protect your child from lead poisoning – free service for qualifying families

NEWS RELEASE November 9, 2007

Salt Lake County Lead Safe Housing Program

2001 S. State Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84190

Ph: (801) 468-2077, Fx: (801) 468-3684, sfox@slco.org

Childhood lead poisoning is considered the most preventable environmental disease of young children but almost 1 million children in the United States have lead levels in their blood that are high enough to cause irreversible damage to their health. The national goal is to eliminate childhood lead poisoning in the United States by 2010.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission is the best source for up to date information on toy recalls. You can visit the website at www.cpsc.gov or call the hotline at 1(800) 638-2772.

If you are uncertain whether your child has been exposed to lead, there is a simple blood test that can be performed at your doctor's office. If you do not have insurance, please call 468-2077 to make arrangements for your child to be tested at no charge. Most problems come when lead based paint is disturbed in homes (or other buildings) built before 1978. Dust from disturbed paint settles on toys, windowsills, and floors and can be swallowed by young children. Lead poisoned children often suffer from learning disabilities, brain and central nervous system damage, and other physical effects.

Salt Lake County's Lead Safe Housing Program is a grant program that provides free services for qualifying families. Please call 468-3169 for more information.

Public Hearing for Private Duty Nursing Rule

December 19th, 3:00pm - 5:00pm

Cannon Health Building, room 125


288 North 1460 West, Salt Lake City, Utah

For those interested in voicing and showing their concern, please plan on attending this public hearing. When you arrive, if you would like to speak regarding this matter you will sign your name at the door on the list. It is helpful to be specific about your concerns and what you disagree with. What do you want to see accomplished? What would you suggest differently?

Please continue to send written comments to: **Craig Devashrayee** cdevashrayee@utah.gov. He will continue to accept these comments until December 3rd. Please explain how this rule may affect your child's services and quality of care. Will your child continue to receive private nursing services according to the language of this rule? Even if these changes may not affect you, please consider how this may affect your family and others in the future. How will this affect families you know? How do you see this as a taxpaying citizen?

Please send a copy of your comments to steveadamtina@msn.com so we can keep a file for public comment on this issue. If you have questions, or need more information, please contact Cindi Green at 904-3400 or email acgreen101@netzero.net or Tina Persels at 433-8005 or email steveadamtina@msn.com

We wish you a Happy, Healthy Holiday!

 **From your friends at Utah Family Voices**



2290 E. 4500 S. #170, Salt Lake City, UT 84117-4428
Phone: 801.272.1068 Fax: 801.272.8907
Toll Free: 800.468.1160 Español: 801.272.1067