



Medicaid at 50

“The Opportunity to Achieve and Enjoy Good Health”

When President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Medicare Bill into law on July 30, 1965, he instituted the Medicaid and Medicare programs that have provided access to the care that safeguards health and improved the lives of generations of Americans.

Since its inception, Medicaid has expanded both the scope of its benefits and the pool of eligible applicants who can receive them. In 2010, one of the most sweeping changes to the program was instituted when President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act (ACA) into law. For the first time, “Obamacare” expanded Medicaid coverage for millions of low-income Americans and made numerous improvements to the quality of the benefits they received.

In February 2015, Gov Wolf extended Medicaid coverage under the ACA, moving Pennsylvanians ages 19 to 64 with incomes up to 138% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) may be eligible for coverage under one streamlined Adult package called “HealthChoices”. This action is working to ensure that hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians have greater access to the health insurance they need.

A 2013 Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation report outlined findings from the Institute of Medicine. This study was designed to set the record straight on Medicaid’s impact on access to care, health outcomes, and the quality of care, and in conclusion states:

Medicaid has been shown to meet demanding benchmarks on important measures of access, utilization, and quality of care. This evidence provides a solid empirical foundation for the ACA expansion of Medicaid eligibility to millions of currently uninsured adults, and individuals and communities affected by the Medicaid expansion can be expected to benefit significantly.

That evidence aligns with the Wolf administration’s perspective on Medicaid expansion. We look forward to continuing to work with community leaders like you to implement HealthChoices as Pennsylvania’s contribution to realizing the dream of nurturing the good health of every American.



Highlighting HealthChoices to Prevent Penalties

For some of those you serve, the prospect of consequences may inspire action quicker than the promise of protecting or improving their health. Though the Affordable Care Act passed to improve and protect the health of all Americans, it is the law which states that people must have health care coverage or pay a fee (also known as a “penalty” or “fine”).

There are exemptions, and those who qualify will not have to pay the fee. Without such exemptions, most who don’t have some type of health care coverage will have to pay a fee of \$325 per person per year or 2% of their yearly household income.

Some exemptions are income-related, and others are keyed to a range of “hardship exemptions” that waive penalties in lieu of life circumstances that make it a challenge for some to pay even nominal coverage fees. But these exemptions must be applied for through government-authored applications that must be completed and submitted for review.

You can learn more about these exemptions at the following link: <https://www.healthcare.gov/fees-exemptions/exemptions-from-the-fee/>



Secretary Ted Dallas (left), Reverend Dr. Malcolm T. Byrd (right)

HealthChoices Salutes...

Reverend Dr. Malcolm T. Byrd

Anyone looking to put a face to the spirit of public service in Philadelphia needs to travel no farther than Reverend Dr. Malcolm T. Byrd's door. For almost a quarter century, Reverend Dr. Byrd has been practicing the principles of the faith he preaches through public service and leadership.

HealthChoices honors Reverend Dr. Byrd for his endorsement and support among the faith-based institutions in Philadelphia. Reverend Byrd recently led a roundtable discussion with Secretary Ted Dallas of the PA Department of Human Services and more than 90 religious leaders with faith-based organizations serving more than 600,000 Philadelphians. The discussion focused on Governor Wolf's Medicaid expansion plan and led to a faith-based challenge commitment made by each representative to achieve 100% health care coverage among their congregations by 2016.

Reverend Dr. Byrd's extensive theological training has equipped him with the interfaith religious perspective and professional skills that have allowed him to serve so many people in the greater Philadelphia community and beyond. He received a Doctorate of Ministry degree from the Palmer Theological Seminary, after his previous completion of both Master of Divinity and Master of Theological Studies degrees.

Reverend Byrd currently serves as the Director of the Mayor's Office of Faith-based Initiatives in Philadelphia, a position he has held for more than a dozen years. He also currently serves as President and Co-Convener of NewCORE, a local interfaith forum. Reverend Dr. Byrd is a current member of the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Sexual Violence Prevention Planning Committee and the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Military Child Education Coalition, Steering Committee and the Superintendent's Faith Advisory Board of the School District of Philadelphia. He is also on-call as a chaplain with the Philadelphia Police and Fire Departments and Prison System.

His gift for matching a broad body of knowledge and experience to the widespread needs of a diverse and evolving population has made him an inspiration for many.



Better Health Choices

In this issue of *Better Health Choices*, we focus on a high-profile health risk that may present a critical concern for many in the communities you serve.

Diabetes - A Major Health Concern

One of the most important health issues facing Pennsylvania today is diabetes. During the twelve years between 2000 and 2012 (the latest year available for CDC statistics) Pennsylvania's rate of diabetes climbed from 7.5 to 9.5%. As of 2013, estimates for Pennsylvanians 18 and older with diabetes ranged as high as 1 million.

According to research compiled by the American Diabetes Association, minorities have higher rates of diabetes than the general population. White Americans have a

rate of 7.6% compared with 9% for Asian Americans, 12.8% for Hispanic Americans and 13.2% for Non-Hispanic African Americans. Educating others about the need to learn about the disease and the role regular doctor visits play in helping to diagnose it is job number one.

A good place to start is with the Mayo Clinic's list of "10 Ways to Avoid Diabetes Complications."

Simply posting these basic tips in your workplace common area or community newsletter can start the conversations that can lead to diagnoses and care:

10 Ways to Avoid Diabetes Complications

1. Make a commitment to manage diabetes. *This includes learning about your disease and maintaining the healthy weight and eating habits that can control it.*
2. If you're a smoker, get help to quit. *Smoking increases a wide variety of diabetes complications.*
3. Control blood pressure and cholesterol through diet, exercise and medication. *Physician recommendations should be obtained to guide all of the above.*
4. Schedule regular physical and eye exams. *HealthChoices covers both.*
5. Keep regular vaccines to protect yourself against flu, pneumonia, and other illnesses and diseases up to date. *High blood sugar can weaken your immune system.*
6. Take care of your teeth. *Brush twice and floss once daily and schedule biannual dental visits. Diabetes can leave you prone to gum infections.*
7. Take care of your feet. *Wash, dry and moisturize daily, keeping an eye out for soreness or swelling that could lead to serious infections.*
8. Ask a doctor whether a daily aspirin is right for you. *It may help reduce risks of heart attack or stroke associated with the disease.*
9. If you drink, do so responsibly. *Alcohol can raise or lower blood sugar.*
10. Take stress seriously. *Stress may cause you to neglect your diabetes care and*

can actually produce hormones that can prevent insulin from working properly.

For more information, connect with the American Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.org.



To apply, visit www.COMPASS.state.pa.us
For more information, visit www.HealthChoicesPA.com
or call 1-866-550-4355.

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