



# Connecting Kids to Coverage

A statewide initiative to help eligible children and families enroll in MaineCare.

February 2017

Dear School Superintendent,

As a follow up to my presentations to MSSA regional associations last fall, I want to enlist your help in addressing an important problem – **the growing number of children and youth in Maine who are without health insurance**. As recently as 2010, Maine had one of the lowest uninsured child rates in the nation (4%), but as rates have declined steadily across the country, the trend in Maine has headed in the opposite direction (our 2015 rate was 6.3%, ranking Maine in 37<sup>th</sup> place). **Now, an estimated 17,300 Maine children are uninsured, 55% of whom likely are eligible for MaineCare**. Beyond the fact that Maine is one of 19 states to decline the federal government's offer to fund Medicaid expansion, our rate increase is due to the Legislature and Administration having lowered the ceiling for adult participation in MaineCare in 2012-13 from 200% to 100% of the Federal Poverty Level. **As a result, tens of thousands of low-income adults lost their health insurance and, we believe, many parents simply assumed that their children lost eligibility as well**. The actual household income requirements for children to participate in MaineCare/CHIP did not change.

Last summer, Consumers for Affordable Health Care (CAHC) and several nonprofit partners (*see logos at bottom of page*) secured a two-year grant from the Center for Medicaid Services to establish the **Connecting Kids to Coverage** initiative and undertake a series of actions to enroll at least 1,500 children under age 20, along with 1,000 adults, in MaineCare. In addition, *Connecting Kids* aims to assist in the re-enrollment of a further 2,600 children and adults to ensure that they do not lose their existing coverage.

We now are reaching out to a wide variety of intermediaries to gain their assistance in connecting with the parents (or caregivers) of uninsured children – family visitors, Head Start programs, child care centers and family child care providers, schools, after-school providers, food pantries, organizations serving recent immigrants, and others. **We believe that trusted educators and human care providers offer the best chance to convince parents of the importance of having health insurance for their children** and connect them to local resource people who can provide hands-on assistance in completing MaineCare applications.

**Schools are a key partner in the initiative**. In addition to collaborating with MSSA, I attended the Maine Principals' Association fall conference and am working with the MPA to distribute materials to all school principals across the state, as well as with the MASN to contact all school nurses. I hope that you will reach out to your principals, encouraging them to become informed about *Connecting Kids* and involve key school staff (school nurses, guidance counselors, social workers, special ed staff, homeless liaisons, etc.) in efforts to identify uninsured students and, whenever possible, contact their parents or caregivers. **Here are the suggested steps in the process that I hope your principals and their staff members will consider:**

**Step 1:** Inform parents and caregivers about *Connecting Kids* through school websites, newsletters, flyers, meetings and other means (*see sample language describing the project included here*).

**Step 2:** Identify students who are without health insurance. When possible, speak directly with their parent or caregiver about the importance of health insurance for their children and encourage them to participate in *Connecting Kids* by meeting with a local resource person to explore their MaineCare eligibility and complete an application.



Step 3: Provide the parent or caregiver with information about *Connecting Kids*, the list of MaineCare benefits for children (*included here*), and the contact information for local navigators and assistors who can help them submit an application with the proper documentation (*included here with each County profile*).

Step 4: Make a formal referral by submitting a signed *Connecting Kids* referral form (*included here*) by fax to Consumers for Affordable Health Care or, if they prefer, by contacting the local navigator or assistor directly on the parent's (or caregiver's) behalf to arrange an initial appointment.

This *Connecting Kids to Coverage* section within the Maine Children's Alliance website contains a series of items, some as further background information for you, your principals and their staff, and others that they can use and share with prospective parents or caregivers (*please feel free to copy any items as you see fit*):

- The *Connecting Kids* PowerPoint that I presented to the regional School Superintendent Associations;
- A summary of the problem of uninsured children in Maine and the positive impact that *Connecting Kids to Coverage* can have;
- **Profiles of child uninsured rates for all 16 Counties in Maine, along with contact information for local *Connecting Kids* navigators and assistors;**
- A summary of health benefits for which children are eligible for under MaineCare/CHIP that may be shared with parents;
- **The *Connecting Kids to Coverage* referral form for parent/caregiver signature and submission to Consumers for Affordable Health Care;**
- A flyer template announcing *Connecting Kids to Coverage* and providing contact information that can be posted in a place where parents may see it when visiting their child's school; and
- Sample wording for a notice about *Connecting Kids to Coverage* that can be posted on a website, inserted in a newsletter, or used in other communications.

Thank you for your attention to this material and your active participation in our collective efforts to make certain that all of Maine's children are covered by health insurance. If you have questions about the *Connecting Kids to Coverage* project, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address below. For questions that are more specific to MaineCare or other forms of health insurance coverage, I encourage you and your school staff to contact the Consumers for Affordable Health Care *HelpLine* at 1-800-968-7476.

Sincerely,



**Eric S. Buch**

Outreach and Enrollment Coordinator

*Connecting Kids to Coverage Project*

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