

Medicaid on chopping block in Ohio

Health coverage for low-income working families is on the chopping block, as the governor and legislature face an estimated \$3-5 billion deficit in the biennium beginning July 1, 2003.

The Ohio Family Coverage Coalition (OFFC), a broad-based coalition of human services provider and advocacy organizations, is organizing to defend Healthy Start Healthy Families (HSHF) Medicaid (which covers low-income children, pregnant women, and parents) from cuts. In testimony before the House Select Committee on Medicaid Reform, in October, OFFC chair Col Owens explained why cutting coverage would be a bad idea:

1. HSHF Medicaid is cost-effective: Non-disabled children and adults comprise 71% of Medicaid users, but only 23% of program costs. Ohio's per capita spending is way below the national average and our annual growth is less than for private insurance.

Most Medicaid spending is in Aged, Blind and Disabled programs, which contain 29% of users but incur 77% of costs. Major changes are needed to stem the growth in costs, while meeting needs of our growing elderly population. But, most changes are unlikely to occur in time to help this budget.

2. Medicaid boosts Ohio's economy, by bringing substantial amounts of federal funding into the state, which creates jobs and increases spending (learn more about the economic benefits of

Medicaid, at www.uhcanohio.org).

3. HSHF Medicaid benefits workers and their families. Health coverage allows low-income working parents to stay healthy, go to work, and treat chronic health conditions.

4. HSHF Medicaid helps the health care system for everyone. When hospitals and physicians treat uninsured patients without payment, they shift costs to others, resulting in higher health insurance premiums.

5. Charging co-pays to people on Medicaid is penny-wise but pound-foolish. Co-pays keep poor people from seeking care on time, causing them to incur far greater costs when problems worsen.

6. Cutting "optional" services doesn't make sense. Dental and vision services are a small part of Medicaid

costs, but are critical to enabling people to go to work.

SAVING & EXPANDING MEDICAID

The biggest problem in the Medicaid program is not inefficiencies or overspending, but rather an inadequate funding base.

Medicaid – and the whole Ohio budget – need more revenues. Saving Medicaid, and other needed social programs will require tax increases (see Q&A About Budget, below). Advocates are looking for tax proposals that will not hurt poor people.

The federal government should help Ohio and other states during lean times. For example, Congress should enact a temporary increase in the

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Rx campaign efforts hopeful

Despite challenges from drug companies, Coalition for Affordable Prescription Drugs co-chair Athena Godet-Calogeras is hopeful that grassroots efforts across the state will deliver the 100,626 signatures needed to move the Ohio Prescription Drug Fair Pricing Act forward. UHCAN Ohio is a member of the Coalition.

"We're off to a very good start," she said, "the fact that the pharmaceutical companies are after us is a good indication that we are on the right track."

If the Coalition gets the required signatures, the Ohio General Assembly will have the first four months of 2003 to act on the legislation. If they do not act, more petitions will be circulated to place the bill on the November 2003 ballot.

For more information, visit the Coalition website at www.rxcoalition.info. Contact UHCAN Ohio, in Cleveland (216-241-8422) and Columbus (614-253-4340) to get involved in the campaign, or visit our web site at www.uhcanohio.org.

The word "INSIDE" is written in a large, bold, white, sans-serif font on a black background.

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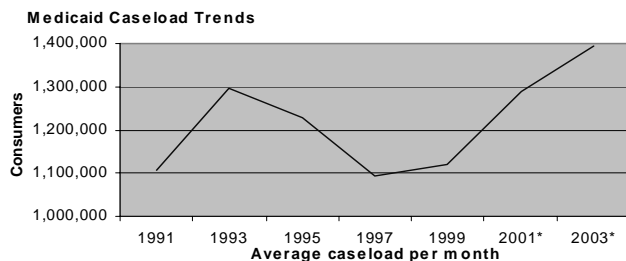
Show that health coverage matters at "Covering the Uninsured Week"

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and major U.S. stakeholder organizations are cosponsoring *Covering the Uninsured Week*, from Monday, March 10, through Sunday, March 16, 2003. This weeklong series of national and local activities will focus the public and opinion leaders on the plight of the more than 41 million Americans who lack health insurance.

Cleveland and Columbus are two of the cities selected to host activities during the week, and grassroots coalitions in other Ohio cities will also host activities. To get involved in Ohio activities, contact Cathy Levine, at uhcanohio@ee.net. For more information on the week's activities, www.CoveringtheUninsured.org.

MEDICAID CASELOAD GROWTH ISN'T "OUT OF CONTROL" ...

As the chart shows, the Medicaid caseload took a sharp dip from 1994-99, coinciding with welfare reform. As people left "welfare" (cash assistance) for work, many remained eligible for Medicaid, but left the program. During the dip, Ohio under-spent on Medicaid and turned surpluses into tax cuts, artificially eroding the tax base of the Medicaid program. The recent increases in caseload and spending reflect a "catching up" phase.



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Since early November, we've had many things to depress us – the economy, the death of Senator Paul Wellstone, threats to human services, and more. But a new year is coming, with great opportunities to increase public support for universal health coverage.

Throughout 2003, UHCAN Ohio will be active in coalitions to **defend Medicaid coverage and lay the foundation for coverage expansions**. By building broad alliances with all stakeholders, our coalitions will win coverage expansions when the economy improves.

Covering the Uninsured Week, March 10-16, is a national campaign to focus public attention on the health care crisis. As local partner to CTUW, UHCAN Ohio will be helping to coordinate activities in Cleveland, Columbus, and around the state. CTUW offers a great opportunity to educate lawmakers and the public about the need to expand, instead of cut back on, coverage to all Ohioans, especially the most vulnerable.

The Coalition for Affordable Prescription Drugs will have finished its petition campaign, stronger than ever. Its volunteer force of thousands of Ohioans will have sent a powerful message to the legislature – that we will win affordable prescription drugs for all Ohioans, no matter how much money the pharmaceutical industry spends trying to stop us.

Support for universal health care is stronger than ever. Help us turn that support into a winning movement. Please, get involved in our work and continue to send contributions.

- Cathy Levine

★ Legislation Update ★ Legislation Update ★ Legislation Update ★

UHCAN Ohio keeps an eye on Ohio health legislation. For more information on pending bills, check our website, or call Cathy Levine at (614) 253-4340. Full texts and summaries of bills are available on the state's website: www.legislature.state.oh.us.

Senate Bill 281 (Sen. David Goodman, R-Bexley), would **place limits on non-economic damages for victims of medical malpractice**, in response to skyrocketing medical malpractice pre-

miums that are causing some physicians to limit or close medical practices. Studies show that insurers, not damage awards, are causing bloated insurance premiums. See UHCAN Ohio's news release, citing studies (on our web site, www.uhcanohio.org).

Substitute House Bill 248, the "childhood lead poisoning prevention legislation" (Rep. Bryan Williams, R-Akron). Thousands of children are being lead poisoned in Ohio every year. In

some areas, more than 1:4 children have this preventable, yet devastating disease. This bill addresses lead abatement, screening and treatment. Ohio's coalition, Help End Lead Poisoning ("HELP"), endorses the bill as a first step toward regulation. For bill summary: www.ohio.cdc.org/HELP.html.

UPDATE

Update is a quarterly publication of the Universal Health Care Network of Ohio (UHCAN Ohio).

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UHCAN Ohio forum sets 2003 agenda for Cleveland

Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones, Pam Rosado, of the Ohio Coalition for Affordable Prescription Drugs, and Dr. Wendy Johnson, of the Cleveland Department of Public Health, addressed 75 health care activists at UHCAN Ohio's "Health Care for All: An Agenda for 2003" October forum in Cleveland.

The forum focused on three of UHCAN Ohio's goals for 2003 in building a movement for health care justice: making prescriptions more affordable to

Ohioans; gaining support for the Health Care Access Resolution (HCAR) in the US Congress; and organizing local community benefits campaigns to win improved access to health care.

Planners, including representatives from the UHCAN Faith Group, the League of Women Voters, the American Medical Students Association (CWRU Chapter), Care Alliance and Antioch Baptist Church, deemed the forum a rousing success. Participants

were energized for the next year's work for universal health care, and since the forum, they have gathered thousands of signatures for the Rx Fair Pricing Campaign. In addition, organizational endorsements for HCAR are being pursued.

For more information on how you can be involved in these campaigns, contact Cindy Maxey at 216.241.8422, ext.19 or at cjmaxey@uhcanohio.org.

Get connected!

Check out UHCAN Ohio's redesigned web site at www.uhcanohio.org

**RESOURCES, FACT SHEETS
PUBLICATIONS
ACTIVIST ALERTS
CALENDAR OF EVENTS
LEGISLATIVE UPDATES
LINKS**

- Do you know what types of health care benefits are available to immigrants?
- Are you interested in current data on the uninsured?
- Are you looking for a link that will help your agency provide an interpreter?

Look no further – visit the UHCAN Ohio web site!

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federal match rate for Medicaid. An earlier Senate amendment would have provided Ohio with \$200 million over 18 months.

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Intense activity at the state and local levels is needed to save family coverage from cuts in the upcoming budget. State-wide organizations should join the Family Coverage Coalition. Contact Col Owens, at covens@lascinti.org, or Cathy Levine at uhcanohio@ee.net. Local organizations and individuals should contact UHCAN Ohio to help build local efforts around the state.

Questions & answers about Ohio's tax & budget crisis

You can find this Q & A document issued by the Health and Human Services Budget Coalition on the Federation for Community Planning website (www.fcp.org/haveaheart.htm). It explains the budget crisis, with powerful, footnoted, facts and figures. For instance, "Q. Can Ohio afford to raise taxes without hurting its competitive position?" A. "Yes. 33 states have higher per capita taxes than the State of Ohio. Thirty-eight states have higher per-capita corporate taxes than Ohio."

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 18

Winning Health Care Coverage for all Ohioans. Sponsored by Single Payer Action Network (SPAN). Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Holiday Inn City Center, 175 East Town St. Columbus, Ohio. 216-736-4766; SPANHealthCare@aol.com; www.spanohio.org.

January 23-25

Health Action 2003. Families USA national activist meeting. Washington, DC. For more information, contact Dottie Shanks at (202) 628-3030, email her at dshanks@familiesusa.org, or visit www.familiesusa.org.

March 10-16

Covering the Uninsured Week. Week-long series of national and local events to bring attention to the struggles of more than 41 million Americans without insurance. To find out how to get involved locally, contact UHCAN Ohio. For more information, visit www.coveringtheuninsured.org.

UHCAN Ohio is a member of **Community Shares of Mid-Ohio & Cleveland Community Shares.** Look for us in your workplace giving campaign if you choose to make a payroll deduction.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT TO BUILD THE MOVEMENT FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE!

The number of uninsured people in Ohio is on the rise, Medicaid is facing cutbacks and 2.2 million Ohioans without prescription coverage face soaring drug costs ... this is a great time to build our movement! Our ability to build depends on your support. Without your support, we will have to cut back on our efforts. If you believe we are doing critical and necessary work and would like to see it continue, please use the enclosed donation form to send us your contribution.

Yes! I want to support the work of UHCAN Ohio!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

MAIL TO:

UHCAN Ohio, 2800 Euclid Avenue, #520,
Cleveland, Ohio 44115.

Credit card donations can be made by phone,
call (614) 253-4340 or (216) 241-8422.

DONATION TYPE:

One time donation (circle one)
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