

URGENT! TAKE ACTION IMMEDIATELY.

Call or E-Mail Your State Legislators on the Appropriations Committee by Monday Morning, 3/30 Ensure Cuts to Medicaid Dental Services for Children and Adults are not Included in Committee’s Budget Proposal.

Key Messages for Appropriations Committee Members:

- ✓ Please make sure that Governor Rell’s costly proposals to dramatically reduce basic dental coverage for children and adults in DSS Medicaid programs are not included in the Appropriations Committee’s recommendations for the two-year (biennium) budget for 2009-10 and 2010-11. Protect basic dental services to adults in Medicaid and do not impose sweeping prior authorization requirements on non-emergency services to children and adults.

These proposals would greatly increase healthcare costs by causing higher demand for emergency care at hospitals and safety net clinics and a higher incidence of health problems that result from poor oral health:

- ✓ Safety net clinics cannot cope with an increase in dental emergencies. The oral health safety net infrastructure would be threatened as clinics would lose providers and income.
- ✓ Maryland saw a 12% rise in dental visits to hospital emergency departments after adult services were cut there in 1993. Hospital emergency care costs ten times more than in-office services.
- ✓ The Governor’s proposal for a sweeping ‘prior authorization’ requirement for non-emergency dental services in DSS programs would make an end run around the General Assembly’s recent efforts to ensure access to dental services for HUSKY children and parents through the recent settlement of the *Carr v. Wilson-Coker* lawsuit.
- ✓ Prior authorization would impose an increased administrative and cost burden on providers and DSS causing HUSKY dental providers to drop out of the new program. It would reduce dental utilization even as CT is out of compliance with the federal “equal access” provision of Medicaid for children (EPSDT).
- ✓ Nationally, oral health problems are already responsible for more missed school days than any other health problem. ‘Dental problems’ are one of the main reasons cited that children visit emergency rooms during the day. Poor oral health jeopardizes their healthy growth, development and learning. We cannot afford this.
- ✓ Increased Medicaid funding to the state in the federal stimulus package is intended to pay for this kind of preventive healthcare and should preclude your having to make these cuts.
- ✓ I am willing to pay slightly higher taxes to retain safety net health services for our most vulnerable neighbors.

Background: Governor Rell called for two major cuts to Medicaid dental services in her proposed biennium budget. These have been rejected by the General Assembly's Human Services Committee. Now, we must make sure they are also rejected by the Appropriations Committee. The Governor's proposals were:

- **Eliminating non-emergency dental care for the 230,000 adults (21 & up) enrolled in HUSKY, SAGA, Medicaid fee for service and Title 19.** We believe this will cost more than the \$51 million projected in savings over the next two years. It does not make fiscal sense and will have drastic consequences. The proposal was Secs. 44 & 45 of the former Senate Bill No. 843 and was rejected by the Human Services Committee.
- **Prior authorization of non-emergency dental services provided under Department of Social Services dental programs** (for all ages) This was Sec. 67 of the former Senate Bill No. 843 and was rejected by the Human Services Committee.

Please call COHI at 860/246-2644 or e-mail madelinem@ctoralhealth.org with your questions or comments. Please copy us on your e-mails, if possible, so we can make sure every member of the Appropriations Committee is contacted multiple times.

Thank you for taking action now!