



**A Message from
 Jean S. Fraser,
 CEO**

25% of all San Francisco children are insured through SFHP!

But is this good news or bad news? Well, **it's good news for the City**, because it means that we are close to reaching our goal of universal health coverage for San Francisco children.

And **it's good news for SFHP**, because it means that our outreach is effective, and that we are providing family-friendly service so families keep their children enrolled. **It's also good news for the kids**, because we work hard to make sure children can get services as quickly as possible and that they get the preventive services they need.

But I'm afraid **it's bad news for San Francisco's economy, and for our national employment-based health insurance system**. Clearly, moderate and low-wage workers are not being offered or can't afford employment-based health insurance for their children. That's just one of the reasons why the Governor's proposed cap on Healthy Families enrollment is such a bad idea.

If Americans really believe in fairness, then we ought to make sure that every child has the same high quality medical care. **Health insurance for children should be a right, not a privilege.**

Given all that we do, I'm proud that SFHP insures 25% of all San Francisco children. I just wish we didn't have to.

*Cheers,
 Jean*

Child Coverage **Parental Coverage** **Will We Ever Bridge This Gap?**

We have good news and bad news to report on our quest to expand health insurance to the uninsured parents of our child members.

First, the good news: The Blue Shield Foundation of California granted San Francisco Health Plan nearly \$2 million to fund premiums for parental coverage.

"The Blue Shield of California Foundation is committed to health care access for the growing number of uninsured, even if we have to support insurance premium subsidies to make it possible," said Jeffrey Rideout, MD, President of the Blue Shield of California Foundation. "Our work with SFHP is part of a broader strategy to push for universal coverage in California."

The new program, tentatively called *Healthy Parents*, would be modeled after the Healthy Families Program parental expansion which the State put on hold in 2002 due to budget problems. Our idea is that San Francisco would step into the shoes of the State and use local dollars to draw down the federal dollars available for parental coverage.

The bad news, however, is that the cap on Healthy Families enrollment proposed by the Governor would almost certainly kill the parental coverage program. To make it work, federal matching dollars are needed. But federal rules require that all eligible children get health insurance before any parents are covered. So if even one child in California is on a waiting list, no San Francisco parent could get coverage.

The bottom line: Parental coverage is at risk along with coverage for children. "We are so fortunate to share a vision of providing coverage to the uninsured with the Blue Shield of California Foundation, and we are grateful that the Foundation is willing to take a stand by funding this program. But we still have many hurdles to clear before we cover our first parent," said Jean S. Fraser, SFHP CEO. "We just hope that once the Legislature and the Governor realize all the consequences of the proposed cap on Healthy Families enrollment, they will not implement it."

We'll keep you posted on our progress. 

HEDIS Update: SFHP Has Come Out ON TOP Again!

Each year, the State measures the quality of the care children get in the Healthy Families Program by health plans through HEDIS scores. On every measure, **SFHP provided better care than all other health plans in San Francisco**, except for Kaiser. (Kaiser always does great on these measures; we are happy that our Medi-Cal members can access Kaiser through SFHP.)

These wonderful scores are the result of hard work by our providers. But we'll take a little of the credit -- **our teen movie ticket and immunization incentive programs**

contributed to our scoring #1 and #3 in the State out of 22 health plans, respectively. These rates far exceed the average of commercial plans nationwide!

Out of 22 Plans, SFHP is...

- #1** in Well-Child Visits
- #1** in Adolescent Visits
- #3** in Immunization Rates
- #3** in Initial Health Assessments

SFHP Funds Ten Access Improvement Projects



Access Enhancement Fund Award Recipients

- UCSF/SFGH Children's Health Center for weekend & evening appointments
- SFGH Dept. of Ophthalmology for equipment for a mobile program to provide eye services at community health centers
- Los Portales Family Medical Center for a Spanish-speaking physician assistant to increase appointments for monolingual Spanish speakers
- North East Medical Services (NEMS) for a new telephone system that will make it easier for members to reach their physicians, and will include a nurse advice line
- Sunset Health Services for a nurse to provide telephone advice and same-day appointments
- San Francisco Hearing & Speech Center for a bi-lingual speech therapist to assist Spanish-speaking children
- San Francisco General Hospital for equipment to expand their urgent care center
- Valencia Health Services for a nurse to provide telephone advice triage demand for urgent and same-day appointments
- UCSF/SFGH Children's Health Center for hiring a nurse practitioner to improve access to patients with asthma
- Ocean-Park Health Center for a program to improve access to care for diabetics by using group visits and non-physician specialists

We know that providing health insurance isn't enough to improve the health of our members. We need to make sure members can see providers quickly when they have a problem. **One of our strategic goals, therefore, is to improve access to services.** But how?

"We could have spent a lot of time and money studying the problem," said Ellen Kaiser, SFHP's Director of Planning and Evaluation. "But in my 20 years of experience in large and small health care organizations, such studies never give you answers that you can act upon. So I suggested to our Governing Board that **we ask our providers to tell us what the problems are and give them the money to solve them.**"

Based on this innovative approach, SFHP created the Access Enhancement Fund. The Governing Board **used \$800,000 that SFHP won in a one-time settlement of a lawsuit with the State Department of Health Services** to fund it.

Through this fund, SFHP is granting \$800,000 for ten projects in seven organizations.

"Non-profit health care systems cannot readily access the newest technologies that make health care more efficient," said Linda Bien, CEO of NEMS. "After years of insufficient funding, we've all fallen behind in using technology to make our services more efficient and effective. Our grant will go a long way toward allowing us to catch up."

Gateway to Fitness Proves a Greatway to Fitness for Teens!

Last season we told you about San Francisco Health Plan's Gateway to Fitness program: a six-week program exposing teens to physical activities to which they wouldn't ordinarily have access.

Over 50 teens participated in the six-week pilot program, and some participants clearly were motivated: One member is now promoting an empowerment fitness program exclusively for teen girls!

"Our participants responded to two very important program aspects," said Lucy Smiles, Gateway to Fitness Program Coordinator. "Variety and choice. They decided for themselves which activities they wanted to continue with. It's an

empowering part of growth that many found attractive."

We are now trying to decide how to broaden the program so we can reach the hundreds of SFHP members who need more physical activity. (Jean Fraser, our CEO and an avid bike commuter, would like to get all the kids on bikes, but the rest of the SFHP staff hold her back!)

One idea we are exploring is to encourage providers to give prescriptions for exercise to SFHP members along with temporary Boys & Girls Clubs membership cards. When a teen member presents the card at a Boys & Girls Club, SFHP would pay for a one-year membership.

Nearly 800 Children Receive Well-Checks Through New Program

(in just two months!)



Our latest program is a birthday card offering a \$15 Toys R Us gift certificate to parents who take their 3 to 6-year-old in for a well-visit. And are SFHP parents interested? Absolutely!

Since its December 2003 implementation - less than two months ago - 800 birthday card claim tickets have been returned to SFHP, indicating that a child has received a well-check.

In the past, we noted that parents who had taken their infants and toddlers in regularly were not scheduling check-ups when their children got older. We found that the barrier was not the doctors, who wanted to see the children, but the busy parents who couldn't remember that their kids needed annual check-ups. So we decided to see if we could encourage our parents to make appointments with a reminder and an incentive.

"The initial response from parents has been overwhelming," said Dr. Michael van Duren, SFHP Medical Director. "Doctors like it too because they get to check in with parents on all sorts of developmental issues that they don't have time to address during a visit with a sick kid."

With this second successful member-oriented incentive, **we are looking at other areas that may be ripe for similar programs.** If you have any ideas, please email them to mvanduren@sfhp.org.

"Due to public policy and lifestyle decisions, it will take years to reverse bad health habits in teens," commented Rowena Tarantino, SFHP Health Education Manager. "But that's the very reason why SFHP is involved. **We simply will not pass the buck as everyone else**

does by saying 'It's not a covered service.'"

If you have an idea or comment about Gateway to Fitness, please email lsmiles@sfhp.org.