



NEWS

from the Consumer Health Action Network
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Primary Care Case Management: A New Option for HUSKY

Connecticut's HUSKY program is in trouble. Only one in twenty CT doctors takes HUSKY patients. Policymakers have concerns about how the HMOs are spending more than \$700 million on the program each year. A new study has documented how difficult it is to get an appointment in the program. To help make HUSKY work better, the state is considering adding Primary Care Case Management (PCCM) to the current four HUSKY HMOs as another choice for families.

PCCM is used now by thirty other states to run their programs. In PCCM, consumers choose a primary care provider (PCP), usually a doctor or clinic, who is responsible to get patients all the services they need. Consumers go to their PCP for all their regular care. If they need a specialist, their PCP makes the appointment. If a consumer needs to go into the ER, the PCP hears about it the next day and contacts the patient for follow up care. The PCP works directly with the state; no HMO is involved. **Under the Connecticut proposal, consumers could choose to stay with their current HMO or enroll in PCCM.**

Other states have had great success with their PCCM programs. PCCM consumers are more satisfied with the program than those in HMOs. **Consumers in PCCM are more likely to get health care services and less likely to have to go to the ER for care.** Most consumers who have a choice pick PCCM over HMOs. Providers are more willing to participate in PCCM than HMOs; it would be easier to find a doctor who takes HUSKY with PCCM.

Right now, the state is still considering PCCM as an option. If you'd like to know more or would like to share your thoughts with policymakers, call us toll-free at 1-888-873-4585. We'll let you know more about the PCCM proposal as information becomes available.

Be Heard!

The legislature is now in session in Hartford, so tell the Governor and your legislators what you think about health care in Connecticut and how they can make it better!

They want to hear from you!

Senate Democrats	1-800-842-1420
Senate Republicans	1-800-842-1421
House Democrats	1-800-842-1902
House Republicans	1-800-842-1423
Governor	1-800-406-1527



“Healthy Students Make Better Learners”

Connecticut's School Based Health Centers (SBHCs) are primary care facilities that provide comprehensive health services to students, preschool through grade 12, right at their schools. The centers are available to any student attending that school, regardless of whether they have insurance. The services offered at different SBHCs vary, but they may include: routine checkups and physical exams, immunizations, mental health and counseling services, prescription medications, dental care, and reproductive health care. Before your child can receive care at the SBHC, you need to complete a Parental Permission Form and return it to the school. Contact your child's school to see if there is a School Based Health Center and to fill out a form, or call our office to find out more.

Unfortunately, not all Connecticut schools have a SBHC. If your child's school does not have a SBHC and you need a doctor, you can visit one of Connecticut's many Community Health Centers, which provide free and discounted health care based on your income ("sliding scale"). Call our office if you have any questions or for information about the Community Health Centers near you.

Smile! Dental Tips

Are your teeth hurting you? You're not alone. Dental problems are one of the most common causes of chronic pain in the US, and diabetics are particularly at risk. Unfortunately, finding the dental care you need in Connecticut has never been easy.

At the Consumer Health Action Network we have been updating our information to help make this process easier for you. If you are currently looking for dental services, be sure to call and ask for our new tip sheet.

*Call to ask about
our new dental
health tip sheet!*

The most important thing is not to wait. Serious dental problems require attention. Wait times for appointments can be very long, so it is important to make an appointment and follow up on care as soon as possible.

If you are having a difficult time finding a dental provider, talk to your insurance provider or Medicaid Managed Care company first. If you are uninsured, check out community health centers and local dental clinics for free or reduced cost programs. If one clinic has a very long wait time, try to call another dentist in your area to see if you can get an appointment sooner. If you are uninsured, call different clinics and ask the price before your appointment.

In the meantime, be sure to take good care of your teeth. In addition to brushing and flossing daily, it is important to limit sweets and to stop smoking. Most dental problems are completely preventable, and so by taking the appropriate precautions, you will have one more reason to smile!

Knowing Your Options: Managing Hospital Debt

If you receive a hospital bill that you cannot afford, make sure to call your hospital's billing office right away to find out about payment options and financial discounts –

it is important not to ignore the bill. You have the right to receive emergency care at hospitals whether or not you have insurance, but the hospital can bill you for services that you receive. **State law limits how much hospitals can charge if you meet income guidelines.**

Many hospitals have programs called free care, free bed fund, or financial assistance programs which can pay for all or some of your care. Most of these discounts will be based on a sliding scale which means that what you pay will be based on your income. The programs and applications at every hospital are different. If you are not eligible for the discount program, most hospitals will allow you to set up a payment plan so you do not have to pay your whole bill at once. When you call the hospital make sure to ask which services are covered and how to fill out an application.

Check your bill carefully; be sure you received all the services that are listed and that there are no errors or double entries. **Be very careful about paying your bill with a credit card;** interest rates are generally very high and you have fewer rights in collections with credit card companies than with a hospital.

Some hospitals may require you to apply for HUSKY or the State Administered General Assistance (SAGA) and to meet with a financial counselor before applying for a discount program. If to receive HUSKY or SAGA within 90 days of visiting the hospital, HUSKY or SAGA should cover the visit.

If you have questions about free care and financial discount programs at your hospital or about HUSKY and SAGA, please call us at 203-772-2817 or (toll-free in CT) 1-888-873-4585.



***Congratulations to
Laurena Dais
of New Haven!***

*Laurena won \$50 in groceries
in our survey raffle.*

*Many thanks to everyone who
completed the survey!*

What can I do about my hospital debt?

How can I reduce my prescription drug costs?

I'm pregnant, what do I do now?

How can I be a better caregiver?

Are there ways to reduce my health care costs?

What's an HSA (Health Savings Account)?

What are medical discount cards?

Trying to get good health care in Connecticut sometimes can be frustrating and can leave you with many questions. Fortunately, the Consumer Health Action Network has tip sheets to help! If you've asked yourself any of these questions, or you have any other questions about health care, please call us toll-free at 1-888-873-4585 for help.



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