

Initial planning work for potential local coverage program completed

A dedicated group of community leaders have spent 14 months analyzing the feasibility of an affordable health coverage plan for uninsured citizens in Sedgwick County. Financial support for this endeavor — the Community Coverage Initiative (CCI) — came from the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund, United Way of the Plains and Central Plains.

The CCI Advisory Committee considered the final results of the study on March 23, including these highlights:

- The advisory committee recommended creating a nonprofit health coverage model to pay for specific health care services for uninsured working Sedgwick County residents not eligible for other public or private coverage programs.
- The preferred multi-share coverage model would rely on monthly contributions shared by employers (\$50 per employee per month), participating employees (\$50 per month) and community contributions (\$50 per month).
- This new coverage program would be managed by a non-profit organization.

The need for a new coverage option in Sedgwick County was reinforced by data released by the Kansas Health Institute. Approximately 58,469 uninsured people between 19-64 years of age reside in Sedgwick County. Of that group, an estimated 40,221 (68.7%) are uninsured working residents.

The CCI proposal would target uninsured workers with incomes at or below 250% of FPL. Enrollment is



Advisory Committee members LaVonta Williams (left), Tim Norton, Claudia Blackburn, Betty Smith-Campbell and Monica Flask study the Community Coverage Initiative's phase one report at the council's March 23 meeting.

projected at 2,767 individuals in year one, 4,151 in year two and 5,534 in year three.

"CCI Advisory Committee members expressed interest in moving forward, once we've sought feedback from small business owners," said Anne Nelson, Central Plains associate executive director. "The Wichita Independent Business Association's executive director Tim Witsman is currently developing a survey of small business owners."

Phase two of the CCI will include finalizing coverage details, conducting research targeted to business owners, working with an actuary to determine start-up and implementation costs, writing a detailed business plan, creating a fund-raising plan and marketing the plan to the business community.



Central Plains board member dies

Randy Nevil, a long term member of the Central Plains Regional Health Care Foundation, died in an accident April 10, 2010.

"It is a real loss to our organization," said David Grainger, MD, president of the Central Plains board. "He has been a great partner and friend. His honesty was always focused and helpful."

"Randy was a passionate advocate for people of all walks of life and he will be missed greatly," said Jon Rosell, MSSC executive director.

Nevil was president of Goddard-based Quick Response Marketing and a founding member of the Central Plains board.



Randy Nevil

New medical director joins Project Access

The new contracted medical director for Project Access is E. Jeanne Kroeker, MD of Wichita Internal Medicine Associates. She replaces Adrian Walling, MD.

"It is important that we have a physician providing guidance to our staff and patients," explained Anne Nelson, associate executive director of Central Plains. "We're pleased to have Dr. Kroeker as part of our team."

A graduate of the KU School of Medicine, Dr. Kroeker completed her residency in internal medicine at the University of Kansas Hospital in Kansas City.



Jeanne Kroeker, MD

Kansas law protects physicians participating in Project Access

Periodically, Project Access receives a question from participating physicians — “How do I receive liability protection when caring for an indigent patient referred by Project Access?” Here is the answer every physician should know:

1. Project Access physicians complete a form that establishes a contract with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. By doing so, the provider receives a significant degree of protection under the Kansas Tort Claims Act (KSA 75-6102 and 75-6120).
2. The act allows for an indigent patient to file suit against a provider, but caps damage limits to \$500,000

3. In the event of a suit, the physician is defended by the Kansas Attorney General's office. A judgment entered against a physician is paid by the Attorney General Tort Claims Fund.
4. A claim against the physician's private medical malpractice policy **can not** be made nor can judgments be found against the physician's personal or business assets.

Project Access's legal consultant, Dick Foster of McDonald Tinker law firm, offered further assurance.

“The Charitable Health Care Provider law is a tremendous benefit to Project Access physicians,” said

Foster. “Under this law, the Kansas Tort Claims Fund is responsible as ‘first payor’ should a claim for ordinary negligence be made for donated services performed for an eligible Project Access patient. In addition, a professional liability insurance company can not consider such a claim in determining the premium charged for the provider's insurance or whether to cancel a policy of insurance. This cushion of protection is an important element in making the Project Access program a success.”

Physicians with question about liability protection are encouraged to contact Jon Rosell, MSSC's executive director, at 683-7557.

Enrollment jumps

For the past two years, enrollment in Project Access has increased significantly. When comparing statistics for the years 2008 and 2009, the number of new patients served by Project Access increased by 19% and the total patient count rose by 10%.

Enrollment increased another 8% from January – March 2009 to the same period in 2010.

The number of Sedgwick County physicians requesting enrollment of their established patients also rose in 2009, by 30%.

“The increase in physician requests to enroll patients is a testament to their continued commitment to care for their patients, regardless of their ability to pay,” said Anne Nelson, associate executive director of Central Plains Regional Health Care Foundation.

Q: DID YOU KNOW?

A: 65% of Project Access patient enrollments occur at one of the city's six community care clinics.

When Project Access was founded in 1999, the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) placed caseworkers in each local clinic to determine eligibility for Project Access. Despite budget cutbacks, caseload increases and rising patient need, SRS and the clinics continue to play a significant role in the program.

Recruitment effort adds physicians

When George Lucas, MD assumed the position of president of the Medical Society of Sedgwick County in January, he announced an ambitious goal: achieving 100% participation of MSSC physicians in Project Access.

“This program exists because physicians in Sedgwick County formed a community partnership 11 years ago to better serve the health care needs of the working poor in our city who do not have health insurance coverage,” said Dr. Lucas. “Today, it is recognized by the Department of Health and



George Lucas, MD

Human Services as one of eight high-performing community projects in the country. For Project Access to reach its maximum realization, we need every doctor to participate.”

To this end, Dr. Lucas sent a recruitment letter to non-participating physicians. To date, 16 new physicians have responded. He intends to continue the recruitment effort with personal phone calls.

Any physician who needs more information about Project Access are encouraged to contact Anne Nelson or Tricia Petz at 688-0600.

NUMBERS TO KNOW

Since September 1, 1999...

9,484 patients have enrolled in Project Access and **948 patients** are active daily.

585 physicians participate in Project Access and **50 physicians** volunteer in six community clinics for a total participation rate of 58% of MSSC practicing physicians.

\$26,274,893 in care has been donated by physicians submitting HCFA billing reports.

\$71,511,056 in care has been donated by seven area hospitals submitting UB92s.

\$3,706,358 in prescriptions have been purchased and **224,785 prescription claims** filed with funds provided by the Sedgwick County Commission and the Wichita City Council and filled at no charge by **75 participating pharmacies**.

In addition, pharmacy efforts by Project Access leveraged over **\$2,602,578** in donated medications for the program's patients.