



**NEW YORK CITY'S NEW ONLINE RENEWAL TOOL MAKES
IT EASIER FOR ELIGIBLE NEW YORKERS TO
GET—AND KEEP—THEIR HEALTH INSURANCE**

Bloomberg Administration launches the State's first web-based tool that allows millions of New Yorkers to renew public health insurance—Medicaid and Family Health Plus - online and help save money.

October 18, 2010—Deputy Mayor of Health and Human Services Linda I. Gibbs and Human Resources Administration Commissioner Robert Doar unveiled an important new tool that allows families to renew Medicaid and Family Health plus coverage online. With online renewal, families will be able to recertify for public health insurance at their convenience using ACCESS NYC—the online resource providing New Yorkers a single point of entry to health and human services programs—a convenient way to assure continuous coverage ultimately leading to better health outcomes. This is the latest demonstration of Mayor Bloomberg's commitment to advancing technology that minimizes barriers to gaining and maintaining health insurance coverage. Importantly, this tool offers a first glimpse of what New Yorkers can expect in the future. Under federal health care reform, it is expected that most people will be able to apply for and renew health coverage online through health insurance Exchanges. In offering online renewal for public health insurance, the City is at the forefront of developing and making available now the type of online access to health insurance that reform will bring in the near future.

"Using technology to make it easier for New Yorkers to keep their health coverage helps everyone," said Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda Gibbs. "It will help prevent unnecessary interruptions in coverage, provide convenience for busy New Yorkers, and bring even greater efficiencies to our operations."

"New York City continues its excellent record of providing public health insurance coverage to individuals and families," said HRA Commissioner Robert Doar. "The launch of our new online renewal tool is one more example of the Bloomberg Administration's commitment to using cutting edge technology that will save taxpayer money while making it easier for individuals to renew."

New York City has made great strides in increasing public health insurance coverage through improved outreach and operational efficiencies. Since January 2002, the number of individuals covered by public health insurance has increased by 47 percent – more than 3 million New Yorkers now have Medicaid, Family Health Plus or Child Health Plus coverage. New York is a national model among big cities, with more than 95 percent of children insured, and we are leading New York State as the first city to implement online renewal for public health insurance.

| Each month, the Human Resources Administration (HRA) mails out about 100,000 renewal packets to New Yorkers who must renew their Medicaid or Family Health Plus

coverage. Approximately 80 percent of these packages are returned through the mail or in person. While this response rate is high, those who do not respond on time or at all lose their health coverage. When eligible New Yorkers do not renew their coverage, additional time and money is required to re-enroll them in the appropriate public health insurance program, and gaps in coverage can affect the continuity of their health care. With New Yorkers now able to renew their healthcare coverage through ACCESS NYC, health coverage is more easily maintained and efficiency is increased.

It is expected that by implementing a renewal application for public health insurance to be submitted through the internet, fewer enrollees will lose their public health insurance, as this offers consumers another option in addition to standard mail and/or visiting a Medicaid office. Online renewal is consistent with the trend for consumers to pay bills, do their banking, register for activities, file for benefits and make purchases at any hour of the day, at home or at schools or libraries that offer internet access.

“This new online renewal tool for Medicaid beneficiaries demonstrates New York City’s continuing leadership in using technology to maximize enrollment and retention into New York’s public health insurance programs,” said Jim Tallon, president of the United Hospital Fund. “The City’s early and persistent efforts to transform complex processes, for which the Fund has been pleased to provide grant support, continue to pay real dividends. Making this new tool more user-friendly for consumers is another in a long line of important improvements.”

“Online renewal for public health insurance programs will play a key role in helping eligible families keep their health coverage,” said Emma Jordan Simpson, Executive Director of the Children’s Defense Fund-New York. “Many New Yorkers lose their health coverage because they can’t complete the daunting paper renewal process on time. When families lose their coverage they have to reapply and experience gaps in their insurance, which only leads to delays in important primary and preventive care services.”

During their renewal period, most Medicaid recipients will now be able to complete their renewal, print a copy of their renewal packet, submit the renewal and/or check the status of their case online. Recipients who must mail-in additional documentation with their renewal will also benefit from the system; these consumers will be able to re-print a copy of the renewal that was sent to their home, complete it and mail it in.

The online renewal technology is available in seven languages—English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Russian, Chinese, Korean, and Arabic. Online renewal is available to consumers directly, but consumers using online renewal for the first time are encouraged to reach out to the hundreds of community-based organizations, health plans, Medicaid providers and others who work with Medicaid consumers to assist with the renewal process throughout the city.

"Families will benefit from a simpler, web-enabled approach to the renewal process, and we hope to see more children and their parents keep their coverage as a result," said Maura Bluestone, Chair of the Coalition of New York State Public Health Plans and CEO, Affinity Health Plan. "The Coalition of New York State Public Health Plans looks forward to working

with the Children's Defense Fund and the City to conduct more consumer testing and ensure that Access NYC online renewal is the most user-friendly tool possible.”

New York City Streamlining Access to Benefits

Online renewal builds on the City’s strategic vision for developing technology-based solutions to make public health insurance easier to access and retain. In recent years, HRA implemented the Eligibility Data and Image Transfer System (EDITS) which allows facilitated enrollers and hospitals to scan and submit the necessary documents to HRA staff to determine eligibility for an applicant. This system accelerates the submission of applications and the communication of eligibility determinations.

Since 2005, more than 400,000 electronic applications have been submitted through EDITS, with an 85 percent approval rate. In January 2010, the system expanded to permit electronic processing of the 60,000 renewal cases that are received via the mail monthly, eliminating the need for the sorting, handling, and manual delivery of several thousand paper renewals each day.

The advent of HHS Connect—the system which enables the sharing of client information across City health human services agencies—provides even more opportunities to simplify the application and renewal processes. Through this system, HRA has begun using electronic verification of births registered through the City’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to reduce documentation burdens for applicants.

HRA is also exploring ways to apply this strategy to Department of Homeless Services’ data. It is not uncommon that vulnerable individuals and families in immediate need do not have, or no longer possess, identification and other important documents, but at one time may have provided this information for previous services. HHS Connect can bridge the gap and allow those with the most to gain and the most significant barriers, to get access to services and benefits, including health coverage.

In expanding the use of consumer-facing technology, HRA is working closely with community partners to ensure that these tools are tested and user-friendly. These projects build on the Administration’s achievements and ongoing commitment to greater access to public health insurance for eligible New Yorkers, establishing the groundwork for an online Medicaid application, so that new applicants experience the same ease and convenience as those who renew online.