



Best Practice: Neighborhood-Based Access to Public Health Insurance Programs

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CITY: NEW YORK CITY

POLICY AREA: PUBLIC HEALTH

BEST PRACTICE

The HealthStat initiative makes public health insurance enrollment available at convenient neighborhood sites and events. HealthStat is a citywide initiative mobilizing 12 City agencies, 11 managed care plans, and a variety of community, faith-based and other organizations to identify and enroll eligible New York City residents in public health insurance programs. The Human Resources Administration's Office of Citywide Health Insurance Access (OCHIA) is responsible for the administration and management of HealthStat.

ISSUE

Approximately 1.2 million NYC residents under the age of 65 do not have health insurance, preventing many of them from accessing essential preventive services and developing an ongoing relationship with a provider. Of the uninsured, about 422,000 New Yorkers may be eligible for Medicaid, Child Health Plus or Family Health Plus, New York State's public health insurance programs, but not enrolled in them. Approximately one-quarter of those eligible but not enrolled are children.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To ensure that uninsured New Yorkers who are eligible for public health insurance are enrolled.

IMPLEMENTATION

HealthStat partners design and implement strategies to foster neighborhood-based outreach to uninsured populations and assist them in enrolling in public health insurance programs at convenient community locations. OCHIA maximizes coordination by providing monthly opportunities for OCHIA, enrollers, and City agencies to meet and discuss ongoing efforts, share lessons learned, and develop new ways to reach the uninsured. These partnerships have been enhanced through use of technology to reduce the time between requests for health insurance enrollment assistance and application preparation.

COST

The average annual budget for OCHIA is \$1 million in personnel cost and agency support.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Since January 2000, the work of HealthStat partners has contributed to a 62% increase in the number of NYC residents covered by a public health insurance program.

TIMELINE

2000

- Mayor Giuliani announces HealthStat, a comprehensive, citywide initiative to connect the uninsured to public health insurance coverage.



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- ❑ HealthStat mobilizes City agency partners to identify and refer families with uninsured children to facilitated enrollers who help them complete applications.
- ❑ The City launches the HealthStat pre-screening and referral telephone line.
- ❑ In partnership with 1199/Service Employees International Union and the Greater New York Hospital Association, the Mayor's Office of Health Insurance Access (MOHIA) [now called OCHIA] launches a \$2.5 million advertising campaign to increase awareness of public health insurance availability.

2001

- ❑ HealthStat focus transforms from a referral process to active enrollment opportunities. City agencies station facilitated enrollers at City agency program sites and activities.
- ❑ Mayor Giuliani announces a school incentive program for NYC public schools in his State of the City address. Schools are eligible to win \$25,000 for enrolling 70% of their uninsured students and \$50,000 for enrolling 100%.
- ❑ In collaboration with several organizations, HealthStat develops a proposal for simplification of both the enrollment and re-certification processes for Medicaid and Child Health Plus and begins lobbying efforts with the state for both legislative and administrative changes.
- ❑ The Department of Education (DOE) adds a question regarding the health insurance status of children to emergency cards that schools keep on file for all students. These cards will help school administrators identify uninsured students in their schools.
- ❑ The Back to School Shopping Campaign is held, integrating a media campaign, corporate sponsorships/partnerships and retail outreach in conjunction with the 2001 Back-to-School initiative. As a result, over 1,500 individuals applied for public health insurance. Back-to-School outreach and enrollment events become an annual HealthStat activity.
- ❑ A total of forty-three schools involved in the HealthStat School Incentive Program are given awards between \$2,125 and \$50,000 each for enrolling uninsured children in their schools. The winners in each borough are as follows: Queens, 17 schools; Brooklyn, 12 schools; Manhattan, 3 schools; Bronx, 5 schools; and Staten Island, 3 schools.
- ❑ HealthStat organizes a holiday shopping campaign with enrollers and City agencies to help shoppers and their families apply for public health insurance at nine locations throughout the City. The campaign, organized with the help of the NYC Police Department (NYPD), was held at the Queens Place Mall, Queens Center Mall, and Jamaica Coliseum Mall in Queens as well as the Fulton Mall and Albee Square Mall in Brooklyn. The initiative took place for approximately two weeks.

2002

- ❑ Under the Mayor Bloomberg's administration, HealthStat in collaboration with City Legislative Affairs and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), participates in bill negotiations to produce legislation mandating the dissemination of public health insurance information by a large number of City agencies. The bill, now known as Local Law 1, is the first bill signed into law by Mayor Bloomberg on April 2. MOHIA and DOHMH develop a public health insurance pamphlet to be distributed by 17 designated agencies.
- ❑ The State Legislature passes the Health Care Reform Act of 2000, which contains several provisions that help streamline the enrollment and recertification processes for Medicaid, Child Health Plus, and Family Health Plus. These provisions incorporate a number of simplification measures proposed by MOHIA and several advocacy organizations.



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- ❑ DOE develops an electronic referral system for uninsured children using its Automate the Schools system (ATS), which collects registration and other critical student data. Information on the health insurance status of newly registered children is entered into ATS.
- ❑ Thirty thousand circus coupons, redeemable for discounts on up to six tickets, for the April 3rd Ringling Brothers circus are made available through HealthStat. City agencies use these discounted coupons as incentives at their enrollment events to help individuals and families apply for public health insurance. This effort is repeated annually as a HealthStat outreach event.
- ❑ HealthStat begins its grocery shopping enrollment campaign with Spanish Broadcasting Systems (SBS), owners of La Mega & Amor Spanish Radio Stations, C-Town/Bravo Supermarkets and the NYPD. The campaign ends in mid-June after outreach and enrollment at a total of 10 supermarket locations throughout the City took place.
- ❑ In partnership with The Department of Housing Preservation and Development, the Taxi and Limousine Commission places enrollers at its Long Island City office where drivers renew their licenses, pay fines and answer summonses.
- ❑ HealthStat's on-line pre-screening system is introduced. Users can screen themselves on-line to find out if they qualify for Medicaid, Family Health Plus or Child Health Plus and request an application kit with information about convenient enrollment locations. The pre-screening system serves individuals and families living in NYC.

2003

- ❑ MOHIA begins the Earned Income Tax Credit-HealthStat Campaign with the Department of Consumer Affairs, the Community Food Resource Center, and a variety of other public and private partners, to offer eligible individuals and families the opportunity to enroll in public health insurance programs at free tax preparation sites throughout the five boroughs. This event becomes an annual HealthStat activity.
- ❑ Cover-the-Uninsured Week (March 10 - March 16) is a national outreach and awareness campaign sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to raise public awareness of the plight of more than 47 million uninsured Americans. During Cover the Uninsured Week, HealthStat successfully organized a total of 176 events through collaborations with faith and community-based organizations, city government agencies, educational institutions and enroller partners who facilitated the applications of 989 New Yorkers for public health insurance programs.
- ❑ DOE initiates a pilot program to integrate health insurance outreach and enrollment efforts with pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade registration. The Early Childhood Education Department revises the registration documents to incorporate information on available public health insurance programs, eligibility requirements, and how to apply for the programs.
- ❑ Working with the Mayor's Office of Management Information Systems, OCHIA develops and launches HEARTS, an intranet-based HealthStat tracking and reporting tool. This quantitative tool adds a new level of accountability to HealthStat reporting and improves the overall efficiency of the HealthStat initiative.

2004

- ❑ MOHIA completes a study of public health insurance participation in NYC, noting that an estimated 800,000 residents are eligible for public health insurance but not enrolled (EPHINE) across the City. The study identifies, by community district, those parts of the City with large concentrations of EPHINEs. HealthStat partners employ the study's findings to conduct targeted outreach and enrollment activities in high EPHINE communities.
- ❑ In collaboration with the NYC Cover the Uninsured Week Interfaith Committee and Baruch College's School of Public Affairs, HealthStat holds an Interfaith Prayer Breakfast and Organizational Meeting for more than 125 religious leaders to introduce them to the *Cover the Uninsured Week 2004 Campaign*. Through this breakfast, faith leaders in large and small



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houses of worship across the City organize public health insurance activities to raise awareness about the City's uninsured population and connect eligible constituents to public health insurance programs.

- ❑ NYPD develops immigrant outreach and enrollment initiatives in the Chinese, Fukinese, Caribbean, Muslim, Bangladeshi, Puerto Rican, Mexican and Dominican communities in Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx.

2005

- ❑ MOHIA secures a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for the 2005 Cover the Uninsured Week Campaign and holds its first conference for immigrant leaders, "*Health Essentials: Resources for Immigrant Communities.*" MOHIA and the Mayor's Office for Immigrant Affairs jointly sponsor the conference and educate business, community, faith and non-profit leaders to learn about health insurance and healthcare resources available for the City's diverse immigrant populations.
- ❑ MOHIA completes the first phase of an unprecedented analysis documenting the extent of public health insurance coverage within NYC schools. The analysis integrates Medicaid and Child Health Plus B data with existing NYC School System data and shows public health insurance coverage system-wide, as well as by region, district and school level.
- ❑ In partnership with DOE, MOHIA revises the School Lunch application to feature a question about the health insurance status of students and members of their household under 65 years old, and creates a new resource, *Hands on Health: A Resource Guide for the New York City Public School Community.*
- ❑ MOHIA redesigns its website to be more consumer-friendly and provides tools to assist New Yorkers in making informed health coverage choices. Some of the new features to the site include: an on-line health insurance screening system to help consumers and small businesses determine what public or private coverage options they may qualify for; comprehensive information on public health insurance options for immigrants, pregnant women and adults over 65; and healthcare resources for the uninsured who may not qualify for public health insurance.
- ❑ MOHIA helps the Cities for Healthy Kids delegation from California identify best practices for outreach and enrollment of children into public health insurance programs based on the HealthStat model.

2006

- ❑ Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg issues Executive Order 88 in 2006 establishing the Office of Citywide Health Insurance Access (OCHIA) as part of the Human Resources Administration.
- ❑ HealthStat partners work with NYC's Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) and DOHMH on a health promotion and access initiative in Staten Island. The effort stresses the importance of preventive health care, expands health screening opportunities and primary care services, and provides new linkages to the range of public and private health insurance options available to Staten Island residents, including enrollment activity at the Staten Island Ferry.
- ❑ For the fourth year, OCHIA partners with the Department of Consumer Affairs, FoodChange (formerly Community Food Resource Center), city agencies and private partners, to offer eligible individuals and families the opportunity to enroll in public health insurance programs at 19 free tax preparation sites throughout the five boroughs.
- ❑ OCHIA engages ethnic press organizations as key partners in the Cover the Uninsured Week 2006 health and enrollment fairs. A promotional strategy includes event advertisements and press conference appearances that share the positive experiences of publicly and privately insured individuals, helping the uninsured understand the benefits of health insurance even when faced with other pressing problems.

2007

- ❑ In collaboration with OCHIA, the City University of New York (CUNY) College Presidents assign Health Advocates for each College to promote health insurance enrollment and education. Additionally, OCHIA and CUNY develop a health



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insurance tutorial for CUNY students, accessible through colleges' websites, to help them make informed health coverage decisions.

- ❑ OCHIA works with NYC's Department of Information Technology & Telecommunications (DOITT) to include health insurance information as part of ACCESS NYC, a key internet-based tool for individuals to access multiple human service benefits for themselves and their family members. For access to public health insurance, individuals can print out a public health insurance application that is partially pre-populated using the information he or she entered during the pre-screening process and then apply at a convenient neighborhood location where the application process is fully explained.

2008

- ❑ OCHIA works with DOITT to include a request for health insurance enrollment assistance and food stamp information as part of the new automated application for free and reduced price school meals available through ACCESS NYC to eligible children attending public and private schools.

2009

- ❑ OCHIA in partnership with Montefiore Medical Center's school-based health center (SBHC) in DeWitt Clinton High School conducts summer pilot to work with SBHC staff to inform teenagers about their health insurance options in school settings and develop an optimal process to assist teenagers with the completion and submission of applications for coverage through the Family Planning Benefit Program.
- ❑ OCHIA launches **NYC Health Insurance Link** (www.nyc.gov/hilink), an online tool that assists individuals and small businesses in search of health insurance in New York City. **NYC Health Insurance Link** lets consumers compare price and benefit information for private health insurance plans in one convenient location, provides information on how to make coverage more affordable, and offers education on health insurance basics and consumer protections. Developed with a grant from the New York State Health Foundation to the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, **NYC Health Insurance Link** is a unique resource that has the flexibility to expand and adapt as the health insurance options available to New Yorkers change over time.

LEGISLATION

In 2001, Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani issues an executive order establishing the Mayor's Office of Health Insurance Access (MOHIA) to increase access to and improve health insurance for New Yorkers.

In 2002, in collaboration with City Legislative Affairs and DOHMH, HealthStat participates in bill negotiations to produce legislation that mandates the dissemination of public health insurance information by a large number of city agencies. The bill, now known as Local Law 1, was the first bill signed into law by Mayor Bloomberg on April 2.

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LESSONS LEARNED

Today, HealthStat serves as a platform through which the City can help shape, continuously evolve and implement outreach strategies with both public and private partners. Healthstat offers a highly decentralized system of public health insurance enrollment assistance that provides many points of access for residents.

As HealthStat has matured, public health insurance (PHI) enrollment strategies have evolved from large-scale efforts to more directed and targeted activities, not only to reach the declining number of uninsured more effectively but also to utilize



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existing resources more efficiently. OCHIA has increasingly moved towards leveraging technology to more efficiently conduct outreach to uninsured New Yorkers.

Since the inception of HealthStat in 2000, outreach and enrollment for children has been focused in public schools. Nearly 70% of NYC school-aged children attend public schools. There are less than 110,000 EPHINE children in NYC. Therefore, a process that matches public health insurance files against the public school registry data is a more efficient method to identify potentially uninsured children and direct enrollment assistance to them.

TRANSFERABILITY

Through the National League of Cities Leadership Academy on Helping Working Families, OCHIA has shared best practices on connecting families to existing benefits and effectively using technology to connect families to them. HealthStat connections, 311, New York City's 24-hour information hotline, the HealthStat website and the public health insurance pre-screening tool are effective mechanisms for linking families to public health insurance programs. OCHIA's public health insurance handbook, *HealthStat: A Collaborative Approach*, conveys the scope of the city's unique HealthStat Initiative and offers a comprehensive model of local outreach and enrollment efforts for other cities, states and organizations interested in developing and implementing similar initiatives. Several cities have received a copy of the handbook, including Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Milwaukee and it is available upon request.

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