

## **UHF Medicaid Client Notice Project**

### **The Problem.**

Barriers to enrolling and retaining coverage preclude higher participation levels in New York's Medicaid program. Among these barriers are notices to Medicaid applicants and enrollees which are confusing and bureaucratic and are thought to contribute to low program enrollment and retention rates.

### **The Project.**

United Hospital Fund (UHF), the New York State Department of Health (DOH), the Empire Justice Center and Legal Aid Society ("legal consultants"), a literacy consultant, and a broad group of consumer and legal advocates are working together to revise a set of priority Medicaid notices so that they are simpler and more consumer-friendly, yet still legally accurate. UHF awarded a grant of \$75,000 to support this work.

### **The Revision Process.**

The project has initially focused on renewal notices because they represent a large volume of notices and affect the continuation of enrollees' coverage, which aligns with DOH's priority of reducing churning in public coverage programs.

To date, work has focused on developing a "model notice" that can guide on-going revisions. The legal consultants have revised the initial notices drawing upon the work of the literacy consultant regarding "plain language writing," conferring with legal advocates in other states that have simplified their Medicaid notices, and conducting case law research on federal and state notice requirements. The initial draft revisions have been preliminarily reviewed and revised by DOH's program, systems, and legal staff to take into account information system constraints, legal considerations, and program goals. Finally, the literacy consultant revised the notices to further simplify language and reorganize the material.

### **Consumer Testing.**

Notices will be vetted by a group of consumer advocates, representing low-income persons, the disabled, elderly, children, and immigrants, and will then be field tested with a broad range of consumers. The field tests will examine the degree to which consumers understand key messages (e.g., that coverage will end unless action is taken) and various terms and expressions (e.g., "public health insurance" and "eligibility"), seeking their preferences for language used.

**Final Revisions and Submission for DOH Review.**

The workgroup will analyze the results of the client field tests and incorporate necessary changes to the model notice. The group will then submit the model notice to DOH for review. If the model notice is approved, it will guide the revision of additional notices which would be accomplished through a similar drafting, review, and client testing process.