

February 23, 1998

Dear State Official,

This is one in a series of letters to States providing guidance on the new Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which was enacted as part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (BBA). This letter provides guidance to States on the process for ensuring ongoing public involvement in the design and implementation of child health plans.

Title XXI requires States to involve the public in both the design and implementation of their child health insurance programs and to develop a mechanism that will ensure ongoing public involvement once the plan has been implemented. States should provide for participation from organizations and groups such as hospitals, community health centers, and other providers, beneficiaries, and advocacy groups. States can solicit public comment in many different ways. For instance, States can:

- Hold periodic public hearings when developing or implementing their plan that provide a forum for comments
- Establish a child health commission or a consumer advisory committee responsible for soliciting public opinion about the State plan
- Publish a notice in generally circulated newspapers advertising State plan development meetings so the public can provide input, and
- Create a mechanism enabling the public to receive a copy of the working proposal in order to provide comments to the State.

These methods, however, are not the only permissible ones. States may use any process for public input that would afford an interested party the opportunity to learn about the State plan and would allow for public input in all phases of the program.

We hope that the public involvement process will help your State achieve the goal of providing access to health care for all vulnerable children. HCFA and HRSA Regional Office CHIP staff are available to assist you. Thank you for your continued efforts on this important program.

Sincerely,

Sally K. Richardson,  
Director Claude Earl Fox, M.D., M.P.H.  
Center for Medicaid and State Operations  
Acting Administrator Health Care Financing Administration Health  
Resources and Services Administration

cc:

HHS Regional Directors

HCFA Regional Offices

PHS Regional Offices

Ms. Lee Partridge, American Public Welfare Association

Ms. Jennifer Baxendell, National Governors' Association

Ms. Joy Wilson, National Conference of State Legislatures

Ms. Cheryl Beversdorf, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

Ms. Mary Beth Senkewicz, National Association of Insurance

Commissioners