Policy Memo: June/July

Summer Edition:
Policy updates since the end of the General Session, May 31

Mandatory Medicaid Care Coordination: Although the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) has delayed the launch of Medicaid Managed Care by a couple of months, they continue to disseminate information to both patients and providers to prepare them for the shift to mandatory care coordination. There are three million Medicaid patients who will be moved to managed care over the next six-nine months. The rollout will be progressive and patients will receive enrollment paperwork as their region is called to transition. The Metro East/East St. Louis region will be the first to enroll patients. Below are several documents that will help clarify the launch of managed care in Illinois:

- Mailing Schedule
- Care Coordination Expansion Map
- Provider Notice
- Care Coordination Webinar: 6-30-2014

Medicaid Omnibus Bill: On June 16, Governor Quinn signed the biggest piece of legislation to come out of the Spring Session: the Medicaid Omnibus Bill. This bill expands Medicaid further to tap into $2.4 billion in Federal matching dollars, which will help restore services that were previously cut in a cost-saving effort. A full summary of this bill is available on the HFS website. One of the most critical restorations was adult dental care, one of EverThrive Illinois’ top legislative priorities in 2014. We developed a Medicaid Dental Fact Sheet, which outlines the dental services available to Medicaid Patients, including children. HFS also updated the Dental Office Reference Manual (DORM) and released a Provider Notice.

Budget: The Spring General Session ended without a solution to Illinois' budget crisis. On June 30, the Governor signed a flat FY2015 budget. If no action is taken, the temporary income tax increase will decrease from 5 percent to 3.75 percent at the beginning of 2015. The Center for Tax and Budget Accountability and Voices for Illinois Children provide comprehensive analysis of the potential outcomes if legislators don’t take action to stabilize the state’s revenue. Without maintenance of the current income tax, we will see a decline of up to $31.8 billion in revenue, through FY2016. Illinois can expect that our backlog of bills will continue to grow and important services will be cut, along with other dangerous fiscal outcomes like an unstable credit rating and being out of compliance with federal regulations. We are calling on state lawmakers to repair the revenue situation during the Fall Veto Session so that critical programs for Illinois families will be maintained.

Other Critical Bills Signed by Governor Quinn:

HB4593: A new law expands volunteer opportunities for medical professionals to allow additional qualified health care professionals to administer flu vaccines with a volunteer license. This will be especially critical in rural areas where access to preventive health care is limited. Signed into law June 21.

HB 3814: A law permits voters to decide whether they think the minimum wage should be raised to $10 an hour by January 1, 2015 through a ballot initiative. Signed into law June 23.
SB2187: Illinois is now the third state to allow clinical psychologists to write prescriptions after meeting certain high education and training standards. This will expand access to mental health services for many people in Illinois. Signed into law June 25.

HB4501: The Governor signed a bill which allows unaccompanied minors living apart from their guardian, to consent to primary care services under the guidance of an authorized physician. Signed into law June 27.

HB5755: On the heels of the Supreme Court’s Hobby Lobby decision, the Governor signed a resolution into law which lets voters weigh in on whether insurance plans should be required to include birth control coverage. Signed into law July 6.

Hobby Lobby and Congress’ Reaction: On June 30, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Hobby Lobby, deciding that for-profit, “closely-held” companies cannot be required to comply with the mandate to include contraception coverage in their employee health plan. The EverThrive IL policy team commented on the decision and the impact on reproductive coverage in our recent blog. Senate Democrats in Congress responded by introducing legislation on July 9 to reverse the SCOTUS decision. The law would not allow for-profit corporations to seek exemptions from the ACA mandate that health plans must cover contraceptive costs but will still allow religious institutions to opt-out of the mandate. This bill is extremely unlikely to pass through the Republican-led House, but Democrats are calling attention to the issue ahead of midterm elections, hoping to score the women’s vote. Take Action! Let Congress hear your voice!

Below are a few other resources to help women access birth control and other health services:
- Helping Women Navigate their Health Plan Options
- Medicaid Family Planning Provider Notice

Federal Investment in Early Education: As part of the 2015 appropriations process, the U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies marked up a bill that includes more than $348 million in new funding for child care and early education programs. They agreed to allocate money to Early Head Start, Head Start, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, Preschool Development Grants, and other critical early childhood programs. This significant investment in the context of a very tight budget shows that federal policymakers understand the critical importance of investing in our youngest children. While this appropriation is not yet final, we will continue to advocate for this vital funding.

Minimum Wage: As mentioned above, Governor Quinn signed a non-binding resolution into law which adds a question about increasing the minimum wage to the voter’s ballot this November. Nationally and even locally, the discussion about minimum wage continues to build steam. Mayor Rahm Emmanual endorsed the campaign to raise minimum wage in Chicago to $13 an hour; other major cities like Seattle and even some states, including Minnesota, have already moved toward a higher wage, although there is unlikely to be any movement on the federal level. IL continues to participate in the Raise Illinois Minimum Wage Campaign and will bring news to our members as the situation evolves.

Stay tuned for monthly policy memos until the legislators head back to Springfield in the fall when we will return with our weekly updates.