

Oct. 31, 2016

Dear Head Start Colleagues and Interested Parties:

As we move into the next open enrollment period to apply for benefits under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), I want to remind you that Head Start programs can play a vital role in making sure individuals learn how to find and apply for affordable health insurance. Our recently released [Head Start Program Performance Standards](#) include a requirement that programs must provide support to:

- Assist parents' navigation through health systems to meet the health needs of their children
- Help parents in understanding how to access health insurance for themselves and their families

The majority of our Head Start children have health insurance, but many of their parents and family members may not. Linking parents and family members of enrolled children to health insurance will help to support the health care needs of the entire family. This in turn helps the family's economic well-being and supports our Head Start children in becoming ready for lifelong learning.

The open enrollment period will start on Nov. 1, 2016 and end on Jan. 31, 2017. Many Head Start family members—including parents, older siblings, and grandparents under age 65—may qualify for coverage. The ACA provides states the choice and additional federal funding to expand their Medicaid programs to cover people who make up to 133 percent of the federal poverty level. Affordable health coverage is available now. Learn more at <https://www.healthcare.gov/screener/>.

Individuals and families will have access to a number of resources to learn about the Marketplace and figure out their coverage options. They can get in-person assistance from navigators, non-navigator assistance personnel, certified application counselors, and agents and brokers. Learn more about the types of assistance available to help individuals and families enroll in health coverage: <https://localhelp.healthcare.gov/#intro>.

In addition, [more than 1,100 health centers across the nation](#) received additional funding to help enroll uninsured Americans. The health centers will help individuals and families understand their coverage options through the Health Insurance Marketplace, Medicaid, and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). The centers will also assist them in determining their eligibility and what financial help they can get, as well as enrolling in new affordable health coverage options.

The Administration for Children and Families has developed a number of resources to help Head Start programs and individuals learn more about the benefits available through the ACA. Select the link to start exploring: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/ta-system/health/health-care>.

Sincerely,

/ Dr. Blanca E. Enriquez /

Dr. Blanca E. Enriquez
Director
Office of Head Start