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Washtenaw County Public Health Wins "Coverage Counts" Outreach Grant Focuses on Opportunities for Health Coverage Available to Children and Families in Washtenaw and Livingston Counties

YPSILANTI, Mich., August 9, 2013 – Washtenaw County Public Health and the Washtenaw Health Plan (WHP) are pleased to announce the receipt of a \$665,704 grant from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). The two-year project is called "Coverage Counts: Connecting Teens, Immigrant and Homeless Families," and will assist nearly 5,000 children and their parents in Washtenaw and Livingston counties with accessing or retaining health care coverage. Nationally, \$32 million in grants were given out to 41 grantees by CMS, using Affordable Care Act funding. This was the only grant awarded in Michigan.

"What is particularly exciting about the program is that we will be able to work with the school systems to identify families who are eligible for Medicaid but are not yet enrolled." says Ellen Rabinowitz, Executive Director of the Washtenaw Health Plan. The program is a unique collaboration involving health and educational entities in Washtenaw and Livingston.

Teens, immigrant and homeless families were prioritized because they are less likely to be enrolled in health care coverage, even when they are eligible. Families with older teens, in particular, may not realize their children are still eligible for Medicaid. Immigrant and homeless families face a variety of barriers, including literacy challenges and challenges in accessing technology.

Notes Rabinowitz, "In most families where children qualify for Free and Reduced Price Lunch in the schools, children who do not have insurance through a family member will qualify for Medicaid."

Ted Westmeier, Health Officer for the Livingston County Public Health Department, is enthusiastic about the project's potential, saying, "We are delighted to be included in this project, and I expect this will offer even more opportunities for outreach to families."

The project partners include the Washtenaw and Livingston public health departments, the Washtenaw and Livingston health plans, the Washtenaw Intermediate School District and the Livingston Educational Service Agency, and community organizations in both counties. Major activities include systematizing enrollment assistance to families whose children qualify for free and reduced price lunch or homeless family assistance through the school systems. In addition, a variety of community organizations that work with teens, the homeless, and immigrants will participate in special trainings designed to help them assist their clients in enrolling in available health coverage.

For more about the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Outreach and Enrollment grants and activities, visit www.insurekidsnow.gov.

For more information about the Coverage Counts project contact Ruth Kraut (734-544-3068) or Ellen Rabinowitz (734-544-6858) at the Washtenaw Health Plan office.

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