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LAUSD helps with health coverage

By **Canan Tasci**

To help a growing percentage of its 700,000 students get enrolled in available government sponsored health insurance plans, the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Foundation for Health Coverage Education (FHCE) have armed 600 district school nurses with a new tool to maximize use of government coverage programs for children.

School nurses are on the frontline when it comes to student health - and sometimes the only medical provider a child will see all year. The *Health Care Options Matrix*[®], is an all-in-one reference chart which identifies how much income a family can make to qualify and then breaks down multiple health care options in LA County as well as online application information for coverage. Working with LAUSD, the FHCE produced 20,000 copies of the Matrix which has been distributed to the school nurses as well as other frontline administrators in the district.

The district's Children's Health Access and Medi-Cal Program (CHAMP) staff and school nurses help educate parents of 700,000 students about comprehensive public and private health coverage options. "Students with access to health care do better in school," said Sharon Swonger, CHAMP Coordinator. "However, we have a high percentage of students without insurance and many of them are eligible for programs they don't know exist. Through our school nurses and health personnel, we help demystify the process and enhance enrollment into Medi-Cal and Healthy Families, and other publicly-funded programs available to students."

"Many parent don't know that a family of four can make up to \$66,000 a year in California and still qualify for government sponsored coverage for their children," said Ankeny Minoux, FHCE president. "In working together with LA Unified School District's school nurses, we feel we have found a significant inroad for reaching families who are in need of information about available government health coverage options."

Funding for the LAUSD customized version of the brochure was provided through a \$50,000 grant from

the Anthem Blue Cross Foundation, a founding sponsor of FHCE.

The brochure will serve as an important reference guide for school nurses, health and human service providers, counselors and teachers who have contact with parents and can give them valuable information about health insurance resources.

"Our Foundation's primary focus is to educate an estimated 14 million -- one-third of the 45 million uninsured Americans -- who are eligible for government health plans, but don't know it or are not signed up," Minoux said.

CHAMP supports academic achievement and promotes wellness by enrolling children and youth into health insurance programs. Under the Division of Student Health and Human Services, CHAMP provides information to parents and district staff on free or low-cost health insurance options. For more information, please visit the website at www.CHAMP@LAUSD.net or call the toll-free Helpline 1-866-742-2273. Parents can call for information and enrollment assistance. CHAMP staff is bilingual in English, Spanish and Korean.

In addition to the brochure, the Foundation has captured, on a single website database, more than 176 government-sponsored programs to help people in need of health coverage. To identify what they qualify for, website visitors can first take the simple 5-Question Eligibility Quiz online, or they can phone the free 24/7, multilingual U.S. Uninsured Help Line at 800-234-1317 and talk with a live counselor who will review the questions with them. For more information, please visit the website at www.coverageforall.org or call the U.S. Uninsured Help Line at 1-800-234-1317.