



Media Contacts:
Marilyn Haese
Bobbi Rubinstein
Haese & Wood
(310) 556-9612
mhaese@haesewood.com

82% of callers to U.S. Uninsured Help Line were eligible for government health coverage programs in 2008

San Jose, Calif. -- 21 January 2009 -- A national nonprofit's live 24-hour help line which hooks people up to county, state and national health insurance assistance programs found that callers into the center were eligible for specific public programs 82% of the time.

The nonprofit center where a live staff of counselors provides assistance to the rising number of uninsured Americans by identifying callers' public health coverage eligibility and then connecting them to more than 176 viable government sponsored programs.

Statistics generated from those seeking health insurance assistance, included a breakdown of enquiries include 10% asking for coverage for families, 8% from people with serious illnesses, 9% from pregnant women, and 5% of those seeking health coverage for their children.

Callers to the center take a short 5-question confidential eligibility quiz based on income, age, family situation, current coverage and any special health conditions. Once the questions are answered, the caller's eligibility for programs is identified and then they are matched up with county, state and federal programs, either through online applications or local phone numbers.

The call center is able to qualify America's uninsured and working poor by using various program grids to review the information with current Federal Poverty Level (FPL) guidelines. County, state and federal sponsored health coverage programs set eligibility requirements based on the FPL guidelines that are updated every year. The following is a sampling of state programs 2008 FPL levels provides a sampling of programs in different states.

(more)

Uninsured Help Line Records 82% Eligibility

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- New Hampshire - The income ceiling for a family of four to qualify for the Healthy Kids program is up to \$84,800 at 400% of the FPL.
- New York - The income ceiling for a family of four qualifying for Child Health Plus is up to \$53,000 a year at 250% of the FPL
- California - The income level for a family of four qualifying for the Access for Infants and Mothers program is \$63,600 a year at 300% of the FPL

There are numerous government programs available for those in need but still many people aren't aware of them in their community," said Phil Lebherz, founder and executive director of the Foundation for Health Coverage Education. "By qualifying them and referring them to specific programs that match their needs, we hope that the staff is cutting hundred of hours waiting at social service offices, qualification appointments with staff, in addition to bus and car trips to government offices." To this end the staff then gives caller of check list to take to local agency

The program was created 4 years ago to centralize the distribution of public programs so that people have greater access to them.

The Foundation for Health Coverage Education is a non-profit public organization based in San Jose, California dedicated to reducing the ranks of the uninsured. For more information, please visit the website at www.coverageforall.org or call the U.S. Uninsured Help Line at 1-800-234-1317.

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