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Help line for uninsured Now in Georgia

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LAWRENCEVILLE - The Foundation for Health Coverage Education has expanded its U.S. Uninsured Help Line and educational services to Georgia, offering information about health care eligibility and creating more access to public and private health care coverage. FHCE research shows nearly 400,000 Georgians, including Gwinnett County residents, are eligible for public health insurance programs, but many are not uninsured. "A third of Georgians are uninsured because they are unaware or unsure of the programs available," said Marilyn Haese, spokeswoman for the FHCE in Fresno, Calif. She said the line originated in April 2004 in California and recently expanded to include Georgia in November and FHCE is working to include 15

additional states in the new year. The help line (1-800-234-1317) is in place to help Georgians obtain coverage by providing live counselors to help explain and simplify the eligibility and enrollment process to callers. She said the hot-line staff will be able to inform and explain such programs such as Medicaid, COBRA temporary insurance, PeachCare for children and Medicare, deciphering the qualifications and determining eligibility. "The government has a lot of programs available, but the system isn't working as well as it could be," Haese said. "This is an effort to help stream-line the programs and inform those who need coverage." Haese said the help line is staffed with information specialists and interpreters who can provide basic information

on both public and private health insurance and help callers identify their potential options. She said operators are trained to walk callers through the information pertaining to their specific state. "When people call they will be asked five eligibility questions that will help identify their situation so the staff can provide information on the programs they may qualify for," Haese said. She said those who don't qualify for a public program can be transferred to an insurance broker who will walk the caller through options and low-cost HMO-oriented plans that might work for them. "The goal is to get people insured," she said. For more information about the FHCE and the Uninsured Help Line visit www.coverageforall.org or call the help line at 1-800-234-1317.