

# Hotline Focus

The Department has a formal agreement with the Healthy Start Program to assist pregnant women who are eligible for Medicaid. We work very closely with Healthy Start on all issues related to maternal and child health care. This month, *Hotline Focus* will try to answer some commonly asked questions about the Healthy Start program.

**q** What is the Healthy Start Program?

**a** Healthy Start is a program to provide uninsured pregnant women with information, advocacy, and referral services. This program is designed to help pregnant women get the services they need for a healthy pregnancy. Jointly funded by the Department of Public Health and the Welfare Department, it is administered by the Department of Public Health.

**q** What is the purpose of the Healthy Start program?

**a** Both departments are committed to lowering the infant mortality rate. To achieve this goal, the Department has expanded Medicaid coverage and worked to improve access to services for pregnant women and infants. Healthy Start works with the Department to ensure that pregnant women get the care they need to deliver healthy babies.

**q** How does Healthy Start work?

**a** Healthy Start operates five regional toll-free hotlines, called *Healthlines*, throughout the state. The number for your regional Healthline is listed later in this Hotline Focus and in the Medicaid Income Standard Desk Guide. Specialists in Healthy Start offices help women access health insurance and work with primary care providers to help women get appropriate prenatal care and other needed services in their communities.

Healthy Start staff assist their clients in negotiating the Medicaid process as well as in getting other services.

**q** Can the Healthy Start program help me with applicants' problems?

**a** Yes, the Department funds Healthy Start for that very reason. Healthy Start will help applicants by:

- making Presumptive Eligibility determinations.
- explaining the verification process.
- helping them get the verifications they need.
- making certain they understand Department deadlines and helping them to meet them.
- helping them find other services such as WIC and prenatal care programs.



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**q** What are my responsibilities regarding Presumptive Eligibility?

**a** Department policy requires that every pregnant woman who applies for Medicaid must receive a Presumptive Eligibility determination immediately. Once Presumptive Eligibility is determined, the pregnant woman should be given a temporary Medicaid card and an Approval to Receive Prenatal Services immediately, usually within 24 hours. If needed, a second temporary card, effective for 15 days, should be sent out on request. These applications receive priority processing. See Section 2120 of the *Medicaid Handbook*.

**q** What about confidentiality; should I share information with Healthy Start staff?

**a** The Welfare Department and the Department of Public Health have an interagency agreement, which permits you to share information about applicants and recipients. Healthy Start staff are bound by the same confidentiality rules as Department staff. For Healthy Start to assist you in the enrollment process, they need information on the status of applications.

**q** What if the Healthy Start specialist and I disagree about the disposition of a case?

**a** Because of Healthy Start's special arrangement with Medicaid, they are very familiar with the Department's policies. Try to reach an agreement informally with the Healthy Start specialist. If you are not able to do so, your office's assistant director and the Healthy Start coordinator should attempt to work out an agreement. Problem solving should occur at the local level without further burdening the appeal system.

**q** How do I get more information about Healthy Start?

**a** You can get more information by calling or writing:

Elizabeth Liebow  
Manager of MCH Programs  
Department of Public Welfare  
Medicaid Division  
600 Washington Street  
Boston, MA 02111  
617-348-5530

or by calling the Healthy Start regional office at:

- Metro Boston  
1-800-531-2229
- Central Mass.  
1-800-227-7748
- Northeast Mass.  
1-800-992-1895
- Western Mass.  
1-800-992-6111
- Southeast Mass.  
1-800-642-4250.