

EXPRESS LANE ELIGIBILITY: CREATING FOOD STAMP LINKAGE WITH MEDICAID/SCHIP

Express Lane Eligibility (ELE) is an approach to enroll uninsured children into Medicaid or the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) by establishing linkages with other public programs, such as the Food Stamp Program (FSP). Colleen Moskal, from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services, and Dawn Horner, from The Children's Partnership, presented several innovative strategies that state and local agencies have implemented to streamline application and enrollment processes between Medicaid/SCHIP and FSP.

One strategy is to use a streamlined application process. Food stamp information is used to find potentially eligible but uninsured children and to provide eligibility information to streamline the Medicaid/SCHIP application process. This method works best in states with Medicaid eligibility thresholds close to the federal minimums or with separate SCHIP programs. Los Angeles County has successfully used this strategy by implementing a comprehensive outreach program. In addition to developing numerous outreach materials, the county has partnered with community-based organizations, food banks, churches, employers, and private businesses to reach uninsured families. In Lincoln, Nebraska, eligibility information from a family's food stamp case file is used to complete a child's Medicaid application.

Another strategy is to provide automatic eligibility for Medicaid for persons eligible to receive food stamps. This method works best in states with Medicaid eligibility thresholds well above federal minimums and without a separate SCHIP program. New York City has been able to effectively employ this strategy because its food stamp eligibility requirements are more restrictive than its Medicaid eligibility requirements.

A third strategy is to create recertification linkages. Medicaid eligibility is extended based on information in food stamp reports or in applications for recertification. Washington State and New York City have restarted Medicaid/SCHIP certification periods at the time a family submits reports or recertifies for FSP.

For more information about ELE strategies, try the following web sites: www.dpss.co.la.ca.us, www.childrenpartnership.org, and www.cbpp.org.