



Medicaid Outreach Toolkit

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To facilitate outreach relating to Medicaid and foster youth by state-based children's advocacy organizations and their partners, SPARC has drafted a toolkit. SPARC communications leads Ed Walz and Colleen Chapman developed the materials. But we sought and obtained valuable insights from partners experienced in working with young adults who have aged out of foster care, and we thank Children First for Oregon, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative for their advice and guidance on message and outreach strategy.

The toolkit is designed to offer examples of materials likely to connect with our target audience of young adults who have aged out of foster care. The toolkit's core elements – handout cards, social media posts, and newsletter – also imply choices on our part about the outreach strategy most likely to connect with our target audience. But all of the expert partners we consulted stressed that outreach to this community of young adults can be challenging, so we encourage you to adjust the message and the packaging based on your own experience. Our SPARC communications team (Colleen for Arizona, Maryland, and Oregon, and Ed for any other state) can help you customize the materials. Ed and Colleen would also welcome feedback on this toolkit, as you adapt it for your state and put it into practice.

As you can see below, our messages connect with the idea that former foster youth are working hard to build adult lives for themselves. The toolkit presents Medicaid as a way to eliminate one worry, so former foster youth can focus on school or career and build the lives they want.

Our advisors stressed that our messages should emphasize that care through Medicaid is free. Former foster youth tend to have tight budgets, they explained, and health care often competes for funds with other basic necessities.

But, our advisors also cautioned that former foster youth would be reflexively suspicious of any offer of free healthcare. They encouraged us to convey legitimacy by reference to the Affordable Care Act, which will be generating buzz this fall. But as you can see below, an underlying strategy for the toolkit is the dissemination of our messages through trusted voices. We designed the toolkit assuming messengers like primary care

providers, faith community leaders, and community college advisors, but you know the credible messengers for former foster youth in your state better than we do, so engage the messengers who make the most sense for your state.

Finally, one of the things former foster youth stressed in conversations with our advisors was that young adults should understand this ACA provision, whether they aged out of foster care or not. To that end, some of the toolkit contents below are ostensibly aimed at friends of former foster youth, rather than at former foster youth themselves.

Keep in mind that the toolkit offers examples and ideas, not a rigid script. The examples below use federal websites and phone numbers, but referring young adults to your own state's Medicaid program or a trusted enrollment partner will likely be more productive, so please customize the materials below to offer the best referral for your state.

Customization also includes word choices. Some of the examples below use the more technically correct shorthand "Affordable Care Act" for the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Others use the term "Obamacare" or the euphemism "the new healthcare law." This mix is intended to reflect the diversity of approaches commonly in use nationwide. If your state's politics make one of these terms – or some other term – better than others, choose the best term for your political climate.

SPARC is planning a second round of toolkit materials for release later this fall. That second toolkit will complement this one, targeting a very different audience: state lawmakers who advocates may ask to support legislation making youth Medicaid-eligible even if they aged out of care in another state.

Social Media Posts

There are many social media channels to choose from, and the guidance we received suggests that former foster youth have chosen all of them. But Facebook and Twitter are good starting points. Facebook is the most popular social networking channel of all, with more than a billion worldwide users. And Twitter's character constraint requires an approach entirely unlike Facebook's. But if foster youth and former foster youth in your state use Google+, Pinterest, or some other social channel, just adapt these examples to fit that forum.

Twitter

If you left #fostercare at 18, Medicaid offers free healthcare. 1 less worry & you can focus on building your life. <http://www.insurekidsnow.gov/state/index.html>

Got a friend who left #fostercare at 18? With the new healthcare law, they can get free care through Medicaid. <http://www.insurekidsnow.gov/state/index.html>

Got a friend who left #fostercare at 18? Obamacare means they can get free care through Medicaid. <http://www.insurekidsnow.gov/state/index.html>

Got a friend who left #fostercare at 18? New change in the law means they can get free care through Medicaid. <http://www.insurekidsnow.gov/state/index.html>

Former #fostercare youth can get free healthcare through Medicaid. Learn how & help them enroll. <http://www.insurekidsnow.gov/state/index.html>

Facebook



Your 20s are your first real chance to build a life of your own. If you are a former foster care youth between the ages of 18 and 25 you can now get free health care coverage through Medicaid. Call 877-543-7669 or visit www.insurekidsnow.gov to learn more. Medicaid means no health care worries, so you can focus on school, career, friends, and the other building blocks of a great adult life.

Photo by Parker Knight



Do you have a friend who left foster care at 18? They can now get free insurance coverage through Medicaid until age 26 because of the new health care law. Call 877-543-7669 or visit www.insurekidsnow.gov to help your friends get the care they need, so they can focus on building a great adult life.

Photo by Mohri UNU

Handout Cards

Our contact at the American Academy of Pediatrics advised that we prepare a handout that primary care physicians can share with patients. She suggested this approach as preferable to talking points, because the handout does not require a doctor to memorize talking points, and it aligns with an approach customary for physician-patient communications on issues ranging from insurance requirements to drug interactions. The same reasoning seemed equally applicable to other trusted messengers, so we recommend trying it with the messengers you consider authoritative for former foster youth in your state.

This toolkit element includes the customizable handout card itself, as well as a cover email you might use to deliver the card to your trusted messengers. The card is laid out so as to permit you to place four cards on a standard letter sized sheet of paper, though you can choose a larger font and make each card a half-page or even a whole page. We recommend that you customize the card with your logo and state-specific enrollment information and deliver the card to your messengers as a PDF. If you prefer to encourage them to use their own logo, just send them a Word file instead.

Cover Email

Subject: In just 15seconds, you can help a young person get the health care they need

The Affordable Care Act makes young adults who “aged out” of foster care newly eligible for free healthcare through Medicaid, until their 26th birthdays. But most of the thousands of eligible young adults in **STATE** don't know they qualify. You can change that in just a few seconds, by sharing the attached handout.

One of the law's best-known provisions is an option for parents to maintain coverage on the family policy for children through age 25. The law gives young adults who aged out of foster care the same protections, by extending Medicaid eligibility.

This is an important opportunity, because foster youth face extraordinary health care needs. An estimated 80 percent of foster children have at least one chronic health condition. And former foster youth were about twice as likely to be uninsured at age 21 than their peers who had grown up with family.

All you have to do to help is hand the attached enrollment information card to the young people who come in. It's worded so as to encourage them to share the information with friends, so you don't have to ask whether they grew up in foster care.

Nobody should be uninsured just because they didn't know free health care was available – especially a young man or woman whose childhood was scarred by abuse or neglect. With your help, they can get the healthcare they need to build successful adult lives.

Handout Card

LOGO

FORMER FOSTER YOUTH: NEW FREE HEALTHCARE OPTION

The new healthcare law makes some young adults eligible for free health care through Medicaid. To qualify, you must be under age 26 and must have left foster care at age 18.

Former foster youth with Medicaid are more likely to get the care they need than those with employer-sponsored coverage. But many young adults left foster care years ago, so they may not know they qualify.

If you or someone you know might qualify, call 877-543-7669 or visit www.insurekidsnow.gov. With Medicaid, young people don't have to worry about healthcare, so they can focus on school, career, and the other building blocks of successful adult lives.

ORGANIZATION NAME | WEBSITE | PHONE

E-Newsletter

Some of the same messengers you might ask to distribute handout cards also send email updates to their clients (patients, students, congregants, etc.). This toolkit element includes a short e-newsletter article for messengers to send, as well as a cover email you can send to each prospective messenger.

Cover Email

Subject: Copy and paste to help a young person get the health care they need

The Affordable Care Act makes young adults who “aged out” of foster care newly eligible for free healthcare through Medicaid, until their 26th birthdays. But most of the thousands of eligible young adults in **STATE**

don't know they qualify. We've made it easy for you to change that, by including an article about this new opportunity in your next **AUDIENCE** e-newsletter.

One of the law's best-known provisions is an option for parents to maintain coverage on the family policy for children through age 25. The law gives young adults who aged out of foster care the same protections. Foster youth between 18 and 26 can now get free health care coverage through Medicaid.

This is an important opportunity, because foster youth face extraordinary health care needs. An estimated 80 percent of foster children have at least one chronic health condition. And former foster youth were about twice as likely to be uninsured at age 21 than their peers who had grown up with family.

Helping to spread the word is easy, because we've written the article for you. And it's worded so as to encourage the reader to share enrollment information with friends, so you don't have to have former foster youth on your mailing list to make a difference.

Nobody should be uninsured just because they didn't know free health care was available – especially a young man or woman whose childhood was scarred by abuse or neglect. With your help, they can get the healthcare they need to build successful adult lives.

E-Newsletter Article

Title: New Free Health Insurance Option for Former Foster Youth

Every year, more than 20,000 children “age out” of foster care on their 18th birthdays. These young adults, whose childhoods were marred by abuse or neglect, are more likely than their peers to have chronic health conditions and less likely to have health insurance. A recent change in the law can help, but only if we all help to spread the word.



Photo by ajusticenetwork

The new national health care law makes former foster youth eligible for free health care through Medicaid until their 26th birthdays. But most of the thousands of newly-eligible young adults in **STATE** don't know they qualify.

If you or someone you know might qualify, call or encourage them to call 877-543-7669 or visit www.insurekidsnow.gov. With Medicaid, young people don't have to worry about healthcare, so they can focus on school, career, and the other building blocks of successful adult lives.

Presentation Talking Points

Based on the advice we received, in-person presentations by state children’s advocacy organizations to former foster youth audiences seem less likely. But some state advocacy organizations have formal (like Children First for Oregon) or informal relationships with groups of former foster youth, so a set of talking points seemed a logical addition to the toolkit.

- Your 20s are your first real chance to build a life of your own.
- Health care is an important building block for a successful adult life – from routine family planning to auto accidents or other emergencies, dependable health provides peace of mind
- But health care can be costly, and not all employers or higher education institutions offer affordable insurance
- One of the best-known provisions in the new Affordable Care Act is an option for parents to maintain coverage on the family policy for children through age 25
- The law also gives young adults who “aged out” of foster care at age 18 the same protections, by extending eligibility for Medicaid until they reach their 26th birthday
- The Free Medicaid coverage is now available for young adults who left foster care at 18, until they reach their 26th birthdays
- This is an important improvement, because former foster youth are more likely than their peers to have chronic health conditions and less likely to have health insurance
- And Medicaid makes a real difference – in fact, former foster youth with Medicaid coverage are more likely to get the care they need than those with insurance through their employers
- But most of the thousands of newly-eligible young adults in **STATE** don’t know they qualify for Medicaid
- We’re working with **MESSENGERS** spread the word, and you can help
- If you or a friend left foster care at age 18, find out if Medicaid coverage is available by calling 877-543-7669 or visiting www.insurekidsnow.gov
- When health care isn’t a worry, you can focus on school, career, friends, and the other building blocks of a great adult life.

A Note on Photography

For Facebook posts, e-newsletters, and other communications, including photographs can add to the overall effectiveness of your efforts. In fact, you could even reformat the handout card to add photos or turn the talking points into a slideshow with photos.

Choosing Photographs

The photographs we selected for this toolkit all have one thing in common: happy young people. Young people who grew up in foster care did not always have happy lives, but our communications effort is designed to spread the word about a solution that can make their lives better. Choosing a photograph that depicts a sad or angry young adult (or an 11-year-old child) just doesn't fit, so select a photo that amplifies the message.

Obtaining Photographs

The best photographs are your photographs. If your organization works with young adults, take pictures of them (with their permission, of course) to feature in your communications. This is the best way to get photos of young people who look like the young people in your community in settings that look like the settings from your community.

If, like First Focus, your organization works more often with lawmakers than youth, there are lots of great commercial stock photography options. At First Focus, we use [Thinkstock Photos](#), which offers a less-comprehensive but more-affordable alternative to (and is owned by) industry giant [Getty Images](#).

But there are also great options that are available free-of-charge. For example, all of the images in this toolkit are sourced from [Flickr's Creative Commons](#). The online photo sharing site offers the Creative Commons copyright management option to member photographers, giving their work access to a broader market and making a royalty-managed stock library available to consumers. In many cases, use of the photo is permitted as long as the photographer is credited (as I've done above). Some photographers may place additional constraints (like bans on edits to the image or use for profit), so finding a photo that meets your needs may take a little extra time, but tools like this can deliver great results.



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