



Here for you

Fall 2003



A Message from Jean S. Fraser, CEO

I Know We Can!

One of my daughter's favorite books is *The Little Engine That Could* - the one about a little blue steam engine that climbed a huge mountain to deliver its cargo by chanting: "I think I can. I think I can."

I often think of SFHP as that little blue engine, having hitched ourselves to a commitment to deliver high quality health insurance to those who would otherwise be without it. Each day we push ourselves to enroll more people in our existing insurance programs, and chug the extra mile by developing new programs. In our last issue, we told you about some of the results: the increasing enrollment in Healthy Kids, our effort to develop a parental health insurance program (since then we accomplished the first step -- state legislation!), and the creation of our Access Enhancement Fund. This issue tells of other efforts.

We've made significant progress...but there are still miles to go. The mountain we've set our sights on now is a high one: We want to be among the top 10% of all Medicaid plans in the country in HEDIS scores.

It's an intimidating mountain to climb, given the diversity and mobility of the population we serve and our small size. Fortunately we have great providers, including UCSF, CPMC, and the Department of Public Health, among others. And the energy of the staff is amazing. Now if I can just chant "I think we can, I think we can" enough, I know we'll make it.

Cheers, Jean

HEDIS Measuring What We Manage

They say you can't manage what you can't measure. Through HEDIS, San Francisco Health Plan (SFHP) is doing both!

HEDIS (Health Plan Employer Data and Information Set) is a set of performance measures used by health plans nationwide to assess the quality of care and services they provide. Think of it as a report card that tracks important prevention measures. For example, we measure the number of SFHP child members who get all of their recommended check-ups and immunizations; whether SFHP members with asthma are getting the right treatment to prevent asthma attacks; and whether pregnant SFHP members are receiving proper prenatal care.

HEDIS measures what goes on in the doctor's office. SFHP makes a difference by encouraging doctors to do better in three ways: 1) by giving them rewards for good performance, 2) by removing barriers to better

care, and 3) by giving the doctors feedback about how well they are doing.

SFHP gives doctors an extra \$100 for every child who gets all of the recommended immunizations by the age of two. SFHP also encourages members to get the care they need. In a program that received nationwide attention last year, SFHP began giving free movie tickets to teens who got an annual check-up. And we send letters to the parents of children turning 6, 12, 15, and 18-months, reminding them that their kids are coming due for needed shots. We also call every new member, encouraging them to develop a relationship with their provider by setting up an initial health assessment.

So how are we doing? Well above average and improving almost every year! Continuing to improve our HEDIS scores is one of our strategic priorities for the next two years. Let us know if you have any great ideas!

SFHP Maintains Provider Rates Despite State Cuts

As a not-for-profit that serves low and moderate-income members, SFHP is different from most other HMOs. Still, our funding comes the same way - a monthly member premium. SFHP is also different in that one of our core values is to support our city's safety net providers by paying them as much as we can.

This year, SFHP's revenue was reduced by a rate cut from Medi-Cal. The basis for the rate cut is unclear since the rate reduction occurred even before the Legislature passed a budget that included a 5% cut for most Medi-Cal providers. We anticipate that we will receive another rate reduction when we

receive our rates for next year.

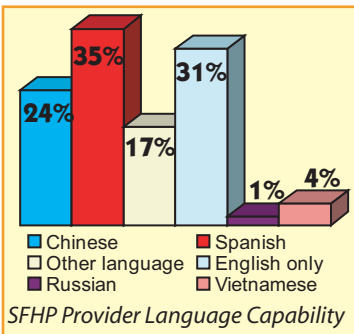
In the midst of this bad news, SFHP's Governing Board met to consider rates for our providers. **They unanimously voted to maintain the rates we pay our providers at existing levels. SFHP itself will absorb the effect of the rate cut instead.**

"SFHP provides care to people who would otherwise be uninsured through committed physicians, clinics and hospitals," said Mitch Katz, Chair of the SFHP Governing Board and San Francisco Director of Public Health. "We want to show our commitment to our providers during these difficult times in a very tangible way: By not passing on the cuts we are receiving."

Every Language is Our Language 我們通曉您的語言 Hablamos su idioma Chúng tôi nói tiếng của quý vị

San Francisco Health Plan's membership reflects the diversity of San Francisco. For the majority of our members, English is not their first language. The top languages our members speak in addition to English are Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Russian.

Providing the services our members need in a language they can understand is one of SFHP's greatest challenges and greatest successes!



SFHP providers reflect the diverse population of San

Francisco. Over 65% of our providers speak another language - or multiple languages - other than English.

To make sure our members find a provider who can communicate effectively, we publish the language abilities of our providers in our Provider Directory. We also take language into account when assigning members who have not chosen a primary care provider to a doctor or clinic.

Every one of SFHP's Member Services and Outreach staff is at least bi-lingual. Some are tri-lingual! And we go a step further by ensuring that our staff members are bi-cultural as well. That is, they have grown up or spent a number of years in countries other than the U.S.

Every language is our language, because every member is our priority.

Medical Savings Plan for Childcare Workers' Makes Lots of "Cents"

They're looking after San Francisco's children, so we're looking after them.

In partnership with the Department of Children, Youth and Families, the San Francisco Family Childcare Association, and Lincoln Insurance Brokers, San Francisco Health Plan has developed a medical savings account program for licensed family child care providers.

The Childcare Workers' Medical Savings Program puts \$131 each month into a medical savings account for each family child care provider who enrolls in the program. Lincoln Insurance Brokers assists the workers in applying for individual health insurance. If the worker obtains insurance, they may apply the \$131 toward the insurance premium. If the child care worker cannot find or afford health insurance, they may use the \$131



each month for medical expenses such as doctor visits, prescription medications, and/or dental services. Any funds that are not used in one month accumulate in the account. In addition, program participants receive a discount card that can be used toward a large number of health care services.

"It's a sad irony that the very people who protect the health of our City's children often cannot afford health care for themselves," said Jean Fraser, San Francisco Health Plan CEO. "This program is a creative effort to address that gap. To date we have nearly 100 participants in the program, and hope to attract many more in the coming year."

Everyone **talks** about doing something about kids who are physically inactive, but SFHP is **doing** something about it...

SFHP'S GATEWAY TO FITNESS!

You can't pick up a newspaper or watch TV news these days without hearing depressing statistics about the nationwide problem of children being overweight. With more TV and computer games, and less physical education classes and sports in schools, it's no wonder kids aren't getting the exercise they need.

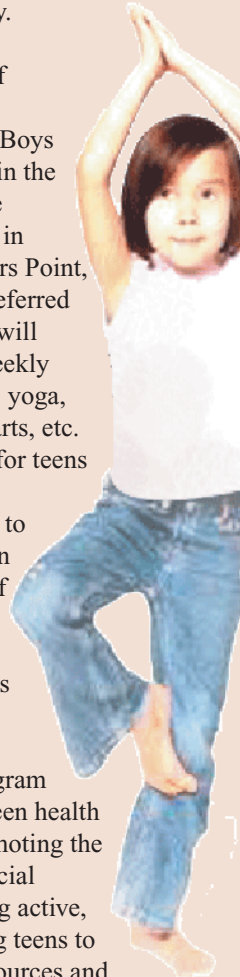
It is not traditional for health plans to tackle this issue. First, no one really knows what works. Second, exercise programs are not "covered benefits." In other words, no one pays San Francisco Health Plan to provide exercise programs for kids, so technically we are not supposed to provide it to our members.

But after much research and talking with providers desperate for referral programs, SFHP is expanding its boundaries to do something about it. Rowena Tarantino, SFHP's Manager of Health Education, joined forces with the Department of Health Services, the Public Health Institute, and Team Up for Youth, to create SFHP's Gateway to Fitness Program ("G2F").

Beginning October 6, 2003, the "G2F" program will expose young people aged 11-15 to the benefits of regular physical activity.

With the help of programs at the Columbia Park Boys and Girls Club in the Mission and the Beacon YMCA in Bayview/Hunters Point, teens who are referred by their doctor will experience a weekly exercise option: yoga, dance, martial arts, etc. SFHP's goal is for teens enrolled in the "G2F" program to continue with an exercise class of their choice once the six-week program is over.

The "G2F" program will highlight teen health choices by promoting the physical and social benefits of being active, and by exposing teens to local health resources and exercises that are fun, safe, and affordable. Look for progress reports in future editions of *Here for You!*



SFHP is committed to creative ways of improving health care access to uninsured San Francisco residents. If you know someone who might qualify for the Childcare Workers' Medical Savings Program, please have them contact the Family Childcare Association of San Francisco at (415) 561-4530.

SFHP AT A GLANCE

43,822 Members	331 Primary Care Providers
3,133 Healthy Kids Members	1,707 Specialists
9 Hospitals	664 Pharmacies

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