

# How Schools Can Support Student and Family Health Coverage: Los Angeles Unified School District



## Overview

Schools can play a key role in ensuring students and their families enroll in and maintain health care coverage. This is more important than ever as the continuous Medicaid coverage of children and families during the pandemic ended in April 2023. States have now resumed the process of reviewing eligibility for all individuals enrolled in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to ensure they still qualify. This "unwinding" is likely to result in over 5 million children across the country losing their health insurance coverage. It is important for anyone involved in health insurance enrollment efforts to understand how schools can help students and families stay covered.

This case study sheds light on the efforts taking place in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and offers valuable insight for other school districts and partners across the country seeking to bolster the role schools play in maintaining coverage.

This is significant because when students have insurance, it supports not only their health, but also enhances their academic achievement. Research has demonstrated that increased access to health coverage is linked to improvements in test scores and fewer missed days of school, especially for students in low-income households. In addition, enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP creates an opportunity for school districts participating in their state's school Medicaid program to increase revenue from billing for eligible health services.

## About Los Angeles Unified School District's CHAMP Program

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), home to more than 560,000 students, has long recognized the key role schools can play in ensuring that families and children have access to health coverage, especially those that are eligible for coverage through Medi-Cal, California's state Medicaid program. In 1997, LAUSD launched the Children's Health Access and Medi-Cal Program (CHAMP) with the aim of expanding health insurance coverage throughout the district.

For more than 25 years, CHAMP played a critical role in supporting the academic achievement and well-being of both students and families in LAUSD's communities. CHAMP, part of LAUSD's Wellness Programs, consists of 6 dedicated Health Care Advocates. The advocates are certified as enrollment counselors that support students and families in obtaining health coverage through programs such as Medi-Cal, [Covered California](#) (California's health insurance marketplace) and the Kaiser Permanente Community Health Care Program, formerly known as the Kaiser Permanente Child Health Program, (health coverage for children

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who don't have access to other health coverage). Each advocate is responsible for serving networks of schools within the 4 regions across the school district. These advocates also work with Student and Family Resources Navigators serving school sites to extend the reach of the program and ensure that CHAMP has a presence at key school and community events. CHAMP advocates and navigators receive comprehensive health insurance enrollment training from Los Angeles County and Covered California. Last year, they teamed up to support more than 3,000 enrollments and re-enrollments.

Advocates actively support families with health insurance enrollment and renewals by providing one-on-one enrollment support, facilitating family workshops on health insurance coverage, conducting targeted outreach, and participating in community events. After helping families enroll in health coverage, CHAMP advocates follow-up within 30 to 45 days to ensure families have received their health insurance card and offer tips and guidance on the utilization of health care (e.g., reviewing essential benefits, providing support in finding a primary care provider). Furthermore, 9 to 12 months after the initial enrollment, CHAMP advocates reach out again to start the annual redetermination and renewal process. In addition to providing enrollment assistance, CHAMP team members also provide health insurance presentations to schools and community members, and health-focused referrals to other LAUSD programs and appropriate community resources, such as those related to food, housing, clothing and more.

CHAMP is primarily funded through California's School-Based Medi-Cal Administrative Activities program. It allows school districts in the state to submit claims and receive reimbursement for activities that constitute administration of the federal Medicaid program. LAUSD receives over \$20 million in annual funding from Medi-Cal. This is a significant source of revenue for the district.

## How CHAMP supports Medicaid Redetermination

CHAMP advocates have now assumed a pivotal role in supporting families as they navigate the post-pandemic Medicaid redetermination process. Their efforts have expanded to include various outreach strategies:

1. **Robocalls to families:** CHAMP is proactively reaching out, making robocalls to all families in the school district about health coverage options and resources.
2. **Collateral materials distribution:** Collateral materials on health coverage are being distributed to every school in the district. This ensures that families have access to printed materials that can guide them through the health coverage process.
3. **Community engagement:** CHAMP is collaborating closely with the Los Angeles County Office of Education to establish a visible presence at key community events. This engagement helps connect families with health coverage information in their local communities.

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4. **Media partnerships:** CHAMP has partnered with a local television station to produce public service commercials to inform the public about health coverage options and resources.
5. **Targeted outreach:** Using data from Covered California, CHAMP has identified families who have recently lost health care coverage. This data-driven approach is critical for tailoring outreach efforts to those who are most in need, especially as more families are at risk of losing coverage.

These efforts collectively underscore the program's commitment to ensuring that families within the school district have access to vital health coverage information during this crucial post-pandemic redetermination period.

### Leveraging Lessons Learned from CHAMP

CHAMP offers a wealth of insights and lessons that school districts, regardless of their size, can learn from as they think about how to support families in enrolling in and maintaining health coverage, particularly during critical Medicaid Reenrollment and unwinding phases. Here are some key takeaways:

- **Emulate the CHAMP model:** Consider adopting a model similar to CHAMP's, where regional leads oversee enrollment efforts, and trained school site staff provide support during school and community events dedicated to enrollment efforts.
- **Use state and county resources:** Leverage existing state and county training programs to empower school district and school staff in learning current best practices for enrolling students and families in the state.
- **Explore administrative claiming programs:** Determine if your state participates in the school-based administrative claiming programs. If they do, explore the possibilities of billing for staff time spent on Medicaid outreach and enrollment efforts.
- **Leverage partner resources:** Collaborate with partner organizations to bolster Medicaid redetermination efforts. Resources like:
  - [Medicaid and CHIP Renewals: Reaching Children and Families in School-Based and Early Education and Care Settings](#) (CMS)
  - [All in to Keep Kids Covered: Community Outreach Toolkit](#) (The Children's Partnership)
  - [All in to Keep Kids Covered: Educational Videos](#) (The Children's Partnership)

CHAMP serves as a compelling example of the diverse range of activities that school districts can undertake to support this critical work. As school districts, advocates, and public agencies unite to support Medicaid redetermination, it is important to learn from programs like CHAMP. By doing so, we can maximize the role school districts can play in ensuring that 5 million families and children don't lose access to vital healthcare coverage.

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