



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Acting Commissioner

June 8, 2011

TO: Chief School Administrators  
Charter School Leaders  
Nonpublic School Directors

FROM: Robert Bumpus <sup>RLS</sup>  
Executive County Superintendent Liaison to the Commissioner

SUBJECT: **NJ FamilyCare – Emergency Card and Electronic Transmission of Student Information**

In 2008, P.L. 2008, Chapter 38 was signed into law and **mandates** that all children age 18 and under have health insurance. All relevant state agencies continue to engage in outreach strategies to help families meet this requirement. Since the passage of that legislation, school districts have played a major part in the outreach and identification of uninsured children and families. The Departments of Education and Human Services would like to continue to engage school districts in ensuring that students and families lacking health insurance are informed about the options available to them. To enhance our collective outreach efforts, we are requesting that you employ the use of the school emergency card that is requested from parents and guardians at the beginning of each school year.

A **sample emergency card** was provided to you in May 2009 (see newly updated attachment) and it reflected the additional queries related to health insurance. In addition to inquiring whether children have health insurance, the sample card specifically requests parental permission to share the information with NJ FamilyCare to remain in compliance with FERPA requirements and N.J.A.C. 6A:32-7.1(g). Again, we are not requesting that you replace your emergency card with the attached sample. However, schools districts should have revised the emergency cards to include the questions on health insurance and parental permission to share the information.

The student's health insurance status is paramount and should be asked annually. If the student is uninsured then their information should be sent using the comma delimited spreadsheet described below. If a child does not return their emergency card or does not answer the insurance question, they should be identified as unknown insurance status.

In addition, knowing a student's status as a free or reduced lunch recipient enables NJ FamilyCare to efficiently use an express process to enroll uninsured students into NJ FamilyCare/Medicaid. This process provides more immediate coverage to eligible children.

With regard to the **electronic transmission of student information**, in order for NJ FamilyCare staff to contact families to enroll eligible students, they need to know which students have been identified as **uninsured and/or unknown health insurance** status as well as which of those students are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

The electronic format and transfer of this information should pose the least amount of disruption to school districts as possible. Please note that the file format now matches NJ SMART file layout where possible. Therefore, we are once again asking that each school district collect each school's information and compile the information into one district wide MS Excel Spreadsheet. The fields in the spreadsheet should include the data elements outlined in the attachment titled "Mail File Fields." Districts must send a **MS Comma Delimited Excel Spreadsheet (.csv)**. Students who are **not** insured or have an unknown health insurance status need to be included on this spreadsheet. These students should be listed regardless of their free or reduced lunch participation. Only families who identified their child as being uninsured need to sign to authorize the sharing of that information with NJ FamilyCare. Families who did not opt-out can have their child's Free or Reduced Price Lunch information shared. If a family is unresponsive to the health insurance inquiry and did not opt-out to have their child's lunch information shared, they should be included on the spreadsheet. The completed district spreadsheet should be forwarded via email to [Syeebra.Palmer@dhs.state.nj.us](mailto:Syeebra.Palmer@dhs.state.nj.us) by October 30th.

It is important to note that many schools have implemented numerous methods of communication and outreach from notices attached to report cards to information in parent resource centers and materials at back-to-school nights to inform and notify parents and guardians of NJ FamilyCare. We acknowledge the outstanding efforts of many school districts to identify children who do not have access to health insurance.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this important effort. Through our collective efforts, we can ensure that children who lack health insurance have access to quality healthcare. If you have any questions concerning this matter, please contact Heidi J. Smith, Director, NJ FamilyCare Outreach, New Jersey Department of Human Services, at (609) 588-3526.

WS\NV\R:2010 2011 FamilyCare Memo to LEAs.doc

Attachments

c: Christopher D. Cerf  
Barbara Gantwerk  
State Board of Education  
Heidi J. Smith  
NJLEE Group  
Garden State Coalition of Schools