

# **Arkansas Finish Line Coalition**

## **Thursday, February 4, 2010 • 1:00 – 3:00 pm**

**Attendees:** Candice Smith, Rossi Smith, Mike Vogler, Elisabeth Wright Burak, Rachel Sandy

**I. Welcome and Introductions (Elisabeth Wright Burak, AACF)**

**II. Health Reform Update (Candice Smith, AACF)**

Candice briefly reviewed the process that took place in passing the health bill in the House and a separate health bill in the Senate. She stated that traditionally representatives from the House and Senate would now try to negotiate points of the two bills to form one bill, but this process is stalled in congress because of the recent elections. The congressional leaders are meeting, but we have moved from policy work to politics and it is no longer issue of “liking” to see a bipartisan bill but “needing” to. The senate bill could go through a reconciliation process that would allow the bill to go through the senate with 51 votes.

Issues: the House is concerned by the absence of the public option, individual mandate, financing differences, and the potential for funding abortions.

AACF concerns: access for low-income children, the ability to have efficient enrollment, affordability.

Funding: worried about the decrease in funding. That the most needy will not receive the assistance they need.

It’s just a matter of seeing how this plays out at this point. We do need to pass this. If we don’t make these changes we will lose what ground we have gained.

Implications for Medicaid: the Senate bill provides 100% of funding for the newly eligible for 4-5 years. States hope this will allow for the generation of revenue to support the increase in following years.

**III. Happy Birthday CHIP Reauthorization (Elisabeth Wright Burak, AACF)**

Elisabeth reviewed how the CHIP Reauthorization set the stage for the ARKids Expansion and encouraged those in attendance to read her [blog post](#) in which she noted that from July 2008 through December 2009 there was an increase of 30,000 kids on the rolls.

Also thanked those who were able to attend the recent press conference focused on the ARKids Expansion that was promised. There were three families at the press conference that have been waiting on the expansion. She encouraged those who knew of families with similar stories to send those stories to be used in pursuing the expansion. She stated that AACF’s argument is this is exactly the time to do this as families will be worse off without the expansion, and unlike the state, these families do not have reserves.

**IV. Medicaid Budget (Elisabeth Wright Burak, AACF)**

No decisions have been made. Going to try to keep spending the same as this fiscal year.

Not having a funding increase still has the effect of cutting services.

1. Submitting recommendations by March 1.

Medicaid Director, Gene Gessow is looking for recommendation on how to cut the budget. Gave a ton of data to this end (trend data by age group, eligibility category, etc.). Accepting budget cut proposals by March 1<sup>st</sup>. All proposals will be made public on the Arkansas Medicaid website and they will make a decision about the best options that will then be taken to the governor.

AACF proposal: going to justify moving forward with the ARKids expansion and the substance abuse expansion.

Concerned about the potential to pit provider groups against each other.

For the fiscal session this means that Medicaid is going to ask for some flexibility from the legislature.

**V. Fiscal Session Plan (Elisabeth Wright Burak, AACF)**

Have more questions than answers at this point. Going to continue to push the expansion.

**VI. Keeping ARKids Expansion on the Agenda**

Encourage Finish Line Coalition to place op-eds and letters to the editor around the state as part of the continued push for the expansion. Encouraged those in attendance to contact AACF if they have ideas or need help.

1. Stories
2. Op-eds

**VII. Site Updates**

Elisabeth was asked to discuss ideas for the focus of regional forums.

Possible focuses for regional forums: enrollment, any burning issues in the area (Northwest Arkansas will focus on enrollment of citizen children), possibly a national update, what is still possible for healthcare for children and families, maybe discuss eligibility guidelines and who qualifies for ARKids.

**VIII. Survey on Community-based ARKids First Outreach (Rachel Sandy, AACF MSW Intern)**

Gave a brief overview of what the purpose of the survey is and what we hope to do with the information gathered from the responses. Encouraged those who received a survey to fill it out and return it as soon as possible. Elisabeth added that may be possible to include others who may be involved in community-based outreach with a similar survey as part of this project.

**IX. Next Steps for Finish Line Coalition?**

1. Exec Committee

Might be a good time to have an executive committee to plan how to move forward. Would be good to look at what to put forward for the March 1<sup>st</sup> Medicaid Budget deadline.