

Florida KidCare Innovations

Highlighting Innovative Outreach Strategies

Community-Based Coalitions

Influencing policy & practice

Simple approaches to outreach can increase enrollment within Florida KidCare, our state children's health insurance program. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2010) found community-based coalitions can be simple yet effective methods to communicate needed policy and practice changes to those "charged with implementing insurance coverage". Community-based coalitions are able to bring to light enrollment and retention barriers increasing the awareness of stakeholders and hopefully, help to create effective solutions.

Community-based coalitions are made up of broad constituencies that can include local hospitals, businesses, social service providers, schools, and Florida KidCare families. Wynn et. al. (2011) asserts "community members want to play an active role in addressing issues and concerns that impact their health and wellness."

The central mission for the Florida KidCare coalition is to use the power of their collective voices to positively impact the uninsured rate of children within their communities. This is why participants of a coalition volunteer their time, technical expertise, support and even political influence. Within Florida, many community-based coalition members work one-on-one to help families enroll or retain coverage through Florida KidCare.

This community-based participatory approach to coalition building embraces the knowledge and expertise of each member turning community-based coalitions into local agents of change, educating elected officials on the importance of community support for Florida KidCare. Within Florida there are sixteen local grassroots coalitions supported by *Florida Covering Kids & Families* initiatives:

- Alachua/Bradford
- Escambia/ Santa Rosa Counties
- The Heartlands (Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, and DeSoto)
- Indian River/St. Lucie Counties
- Monroe County
- Orange/Seminole Counties
- The Panhandle Coalition
- Pinellas County
- Brevard County
- Gadsden County
- Highlands County
- Manasota Coalition (Manatee/Sarasota Counties)
- Okeechobee County
- Palm Beach County
- Pasco County
- Polk County

Each of these coalitions is vital to statewide outreach initiatives for Florida KidCare. However the Manasota Florida KidCare Coalition has taken the community-based participatory approach to coalition building to new levels. The coalition is committed to implementing broad outreach strategies in order to promote Florida KidCare throughout both counties they serve, Manatee and Sarasota.



This commitment to their community begins with the coalition's outreach coordinator, Anyelle "Ellie" De Leon, AmeriCorps/Vista Volunteer. AmeriCorps VISTA is the national service program designed specifically to fight poverty. VISTA members commit to serve full-time for a year at a nonprofit organization or local government agency, working to fight illiteracy, improve health services, create businesses, strengthen community groups, and much more. With passion, commitment, and hard work, it is the vision of VISTA volunteers to create or expand programs designed to bring individuals and communities out of poverty. In her role as outreach coordinator, Ellie has led the group through creating and adopting bylaws, membership applications, event planning, and all the building steps to create an innovative coalition.

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Manasota Florida KidCare Coalition

Manasota Florida KidCare Coalition Healthy Kids Field Day event



*Coalition member Linda Johnson
(left)*



*FKC Coalition member Cathy Joyce,
Manatee County Health Department*



*FKC member Becky Bouchard and
Manatee Memorial Hospital, volunteers
gave Beanie Babies as prizes at the event.*

The Manasota Florida KidCare Coalition is comprised of social service providers, representatives from the Agency for Health Care Administration, Department of Children and Families, Department of Health, and community leaders from Manatee and Sarasota Counties.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2006 Uninsured Children in Florida report, there were 16,065 uninsured children living in Sarasota County and 15,109 uninsured children living in Manatee County.

The Coalition's leadership acknowledges that since its beginning, their coalition has been innovative. In 2010, "we weren't creating a new mission or need for this coalition; those already existed. We have a high rate of uninsured children in our communities therefore the mission of our Florida KidCare Coalition is simple – the need to ensure all children in Manatee-Sarasota Counties have affordable healthcare benefits."

Ellen Hepner from Community Haven, along with Kim Ross, Maria Zavala and Pat Johnson, with Whole Child Manatee attribute two key factors to the coalition's unique approach to building coalition structure: Ellie's tenacity as a volunteer and the people committed to a common goal; and seeing every child in Manatee and Sarasota Counties receive health care coverage. Working together, this group of individuals has created a community-based coalition grounded by a strategic plan and procedures while still maintaining their dedication to expanding community awareness of Florida KidCare

The Manasota Coalition knows they were fortunate to have Ellie's support as they built the coalition's infrastructure. They believe other coalitions can replicate their model for working with volunteers through VISTA/AmeriCorp or similar volunteer program. Yet, it should be understood that these volunteers need to be a high caliber, civically engaged, and dedicated individual. Coalitions want a volunteer who can be out in the community and become the face of the coalition. Families and community partners need to be able to identify the volunteer as a trusted friend. An effective volunteer will help a family complete the Florida KidCare application, work with a team of dynamic community leaders, and take a meeting with the mayor's office then help organize a health fair.

For example, the Manasota Coalition's outreach strategy is reaching out to their communities with family-friendly events. In October 2010, Ellie was approached by Volunteer Manatee's executive director Adraine McKell about using a \$1000.00 gift from America's Promise for a child-centered event. Ellie brought the "Healthy Kids Field Day" idea to the coalition and the group agreed that this could be their first event held in a part of Manatee County that is underserved, but has a high rate of uninsured children. Four months later, with the \$1000.00, donations from the community and a partnership with the Parrish YMCA, this event reached over 100 families.



Anyelle "Ellie" De Leon, with her AmeriCorps*VISTA member "100 Best Communities for Young People" award.

Building a Sustainable Coalition

What motivates the Manasota Coalition is their vision to see children receiving affordable, comprehensive health care. The Coalition's long-term goal is to "go out of business" through ensuring all of Florida's children have health care coverage. The Coalition believes what helped cultivate their mission and stand out from other area grassroots groups is how they used their memberships within larger community collaborations to form their Florida KidCare Coalition, creating a new catalyst uniting Manatee and Sarasota Counties.

As an example, the Coalition is currently collaborating with ACCESS sites and teen parenting programs to promote Florida KidCare and encourage program enrollment. Yet, the leadership group of the Coalition recognizes that to sustain their Coalition it needs to be focusing on leadership succession and recruiting new members. The future of the Coalition depends on "education, education, and more education so that the public is familiar with the Florida KidCare program." The Coalition accepts that it takes time to build this type of sustainability. It is the belief of the Coalition leadership that once they get the message out that Florida KidCare is available for families; their community will rally to help maintain the Coalition.

In order for this approach to work, the Coalition understands that working with chambers, small businesses, government and schools is critical. This is the hardest part of coalition building – mobilizing multiple communities. The Coalition is aware that the solution is to draw on stories from the hospitals, schools, local employers, and Florida KidCare families. The sharing of personal stories demonstrates not only the repercussions uninsured children have on families but also on community health. The Coalition's solution is to utilize the media and community contacts to re-tell these stories over and over again. This strategy can increase the support and membership around their Coalition table. As Families USA (2008) found "stories about the experiences of people help make difficult and often complex policy issues understandable to a broader group." Through these stories the Coalition can use reporters and policymakers to better illustrate the everyday struggles that residents in Manatee and Sarasota face concerning their children's health care.

Lessons Learned

Manasota's advice for other coalitions and communities looking to maximize their resources is to: (a) identify core services for children's health; (b) met community leaders and gatekeepers; (c) create a plan of action to target communities and neighborhoods with the highest rates of uninsured children; then (d) invest the interest of service providers, community leaders and parents towards building your coalition.

Additionally, working to build a coalition between two different communities can be a challenge. First there is the distance and travel for meetings and events. Meeting location is critical to shaping coalition membership. When the coalition first began, Manasota tried to centralize their meeting locations but now they are faced with having more participation in one county than the other. Therefore, meetings are currently held within this one county. Manasota coalition members know that this factor within the coalition's logistics needs to be flexible. The coalition anticipates based on their membership recruitment that their meeting location will once again change.

There are also challenges of staffing changes within partnering organizations. Staff that is dedicated and trained to work with the coalition then leaves their organization and that position is not replaced. To help overcome this issue, Manasota's membership recruitment focuses on organizations that provide services within both counties. What every coalition needs to know is that these are common challenges and the solutions are "difficult but not impossible".

Credits

Agency for Health Care
Administration
AmeriCorps VISTA
AmeriCorps 20/20 VISTA Vision
Project Bradenton, FL
Families USA
Florida Covering Kids & Families
Florida KidCare
Lawton & Rhea Chiles Center for
Healthy Mothers & Babies
Manasota Florida KidCare Coalition
The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
USF Health

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Florida Covering Kids & Families is a statewide program working to ensure that all eligible children and families are enrolled in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Its statewide coalition is a broad representation of Florida's agencies, organizations, and key leaders-representatives from child advocacy groups, child care organizations, provider groups, private health plans, private coverage programs for low-income children, the business community, minority organizations, in addition to numerous state agencies charged with Medicaid and federal; program implementation. The Coalition also works with community coalitions in targeted regions around the state.



USF Health is dedicated to creating a model of health care based on understanding the full spectrum of health. It includes the University of South Florida's colleges of medicine, nursing, and public health; the schools of biomedical sciences as well as physical therapy & rehabilitation sciences; and the USF Physicians Group. With more than \$.360 million in research grants and contracts last year, USF is one of the nation's top 63 public research universities and one of 39 community-engaged, four-year public universities designed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. For more information, visits www.health.usf.edu.

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