

Improving Health Outcomes With a Medical Home

The Issue

The Louisiana Children's Health Insurance Program (LaCHIP) offers services for uninsured children according to family size and income, for uninsured children. LaCHIP wanted to introduce their clients to the concept of a "medical home" where children's care is coordinated and managed by a personal physician or a co-located team of physicians to improve health outcomes. A medical home is not just a physical locale; it is a comprehensive approach to providing quality health care. Patients with designated medical homes are more likely to develop relationships with their providers over time, forming a strong bond for maintaining healthy lifestyles and coordinating preventive health services.

The Challenge

The medical home concept is not only widely unknown among health care consumers (including those with limited literacy skills), but also unfamiliar to individuals and families with high mobility rates. Children whose families experience frequent job changes or relocations are more likely to seek health care services in an emergency room, urgent care facility, or walk-in clinic. Louisiana recognized the importance for children in the CHIP program to obtain health care in the same place each time from physicians familiar with their medical histories to avoid unnecessary and costly trips to the emergency room.

LaCHIP wanted to create an educational tool to encourage their clients to seek continuous care, rather than crisis care, and turned to the MAXIMUS Center for Health Literacy to create a poster to introduce the medical home concept. LaCHIP believed that placing a poster in places where their clients might frequent—such as clinics, doctors offices, and community based organizations—would help them to seek a medical home. The poster would serve as a visual reminder to keep going there for health care services.

The Solution

LaCHIP provided MAXIMUS with an initial draft of the poster concept, which included headers such as "building healthy families." They chose a friendly looking building, which could be a doctor's office, a clinic, or even a hospital. The Center for Health Literacy followed the original design concept to create the poster, but also decided to communicate the importance of conducting field tests with the target audience—LaCHIP families residing in local communities. It was critical to solicit feedback to ensure that the families were able to understand the concept of medical home to successfully improve outcomes and reduce costs.

In order to find convenient locations for the clients, two MAXIMUS researchers sought out community based organizations that served the target audience. The researchers conducted one-on-one interviews to determine whether the poster's current design allowed the clients to read and understand the key message. The researchers asked the clients to describe the concept of a medical home in their own words as a way to test and validate the poster design.

The results of the field test showed that the families receiving LaCHIP benefits did not fully understand the concept of a medical home based on the original poster design. Some families thought a medical home meant that a doctor makes a home visit, while others thought it meant the benefits were extended to the entire household once a child became eligible for CHIP.

“The MAXIMUS Center for Health Literacy did a remarkable job with the poster and really drilled down the message to a clear and comprehensible point.”

*Dawn Love, Public Information Director,
Louisiana Medicaid/LaCHIP*

The Center for Health Literacy went back to the drawing board and redesigned the poster with a new title “Medical Home” and specific tag line “Your Medical Home is your doctor’s office or the clinic where your family goes for health care”. The center also added the heading “Why you need a Medical Home” and gave the building a sign reading “My Family Doctor.”

The Outcome

The addition of concrete, specific wording in the revised poster by the Center for Health Literacy made all the difference. The new poster met the objectives of LaCHIP and the changes made as a result of the field testing ensured that the target audience could read and comprehend the target message. LaCHIP had successfully emphasized that the ideal situation for families is to establish a medical home, resulting in the development of:

- Physician-patient relationships over time
- Storage of medical records in a centralized location
- Creation of cost savings to the state due to fewer unnecessary visits to the emergency room

The MAXIMUS Center for Health Literacy specializes in researching and developing materials that are easy to read and understand. To learn how we can help you create consumer-friendly materials for your program, visit us at www.maximus.com or contact us at **1.800.MAXIMUS** or healthservices@maximus.com.



Medical Home
Your doctor’s office or the clinic where your family goes for health care.

Why you need a Medical Home:

- Your doctor or primary provider gets to know you and your health care needs.
- Your family’s medical records are in one place.
- Your medical insurance is accepted.
- Your provider can help you find specialists.
- You can get information about other resources in your community.
- You can call anytime for care or advice, even at night or on weekends.
- You can get treatment for common medical problems instead of going to the Emergency Room, when the problem is not an emergency.

Building healthy families

Your Medical Home helps you keep your children healthy.

- They keep careful records of your child’s shots, checkups and other special needs.
- They give you tips about how to take the best possible care of your growing child.
- They help you learn how to discuss difficult things with your teenager, and help you teach your teen how to become a healthy adult.

Your Medical Home
is your doctor’s office or the clinic where your family goes for health care.

Find a Medical Home for your family now!
Call **1-877-2LaCHIP** or **1-877-252-2447**. You can call Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The call is free. You can also visit our website at www.lachip.org.

