

United Way is working to advance the common good by providing the building blocks of a good life: Education, Income and Health. Each building block requires multiple approaches, including community change strategies, funding programs at partner agencies as well as other community initiatives. Below, you'll learn about one community change strategy that United Way is implementing to make a difference in the area of Health.



United Way of  
Greater Kansas City

# Healthy Connections

## A Community Change Strategy for Health

Regular and preventive health care does much more than simply improve lifelong health. People cannot lead healthy and productive lives if they cannot afford the care they need when they get sick. A robust body of well-designed, high-quality research provides compelling findings about the harms of being uninsured and the benefits of gaining health insurance for both children and adults. National and state policymakers recognize the hardship for those with low incomes to purchase private insurance coverage on their own and established Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to provide assistance for certain populations based on factors of age, health conditions and income.

### United Way's Strategic Community Change initiative:

*Promote access to regular health care for children, their parents and pregnant women*

### Results Target

Many low-income children are eligible for publicly financed health insurance (Medicaid or CHIP), but are not enrolled until they have an urgent medical problem. Thus, they do not get regular or preventive care. The health literature is clear - childhood is the place to start to improve health outcomes. Getting a healthy start in life improves a child's chances of becoming a healthy adult and avoiding chronic conditions that can be limiting or disabling. Parents who have health insurance are more likely to seek health care for their children. Good health for pregnant women can lead to better health for their infant.

United Way recognizes that national health care reform is actively under consideration for implementation at both the federal and state levels. Meanwhile, there are thousands of people in the Kansas City metropolitan area who do not have health insurance – a great number of whom are already eligible for the previously available public health coverage.

### Key Results

#### Improved health outcomes:

- Research documents that regular and preventive child health care improves lifelong health.
- Parents who have health insurance are more likely to seek health care for their children.

#### Investment in the future:

- Poor childhood health can limit education attainment, which negatively impacts adult health and limits employment opportunities.
- Getting a healthy start in life improves a child's chances of avoiding chronic conditions that can be limiting and/or disabling and that can decrease life span.

## Results Achieved to Date:

United Way of Greater Kansas City seeks to maximize enrollment of eligible children and their parents, and pregnant women in existing public health insurance.

In 2010, United Way funded nine organizations with grants totaling \$270,000 to do outreach and enrollment. In a nine-month period, those organizations completed 705 applications for 1,151 people. It is estimated that approximately 700 children and 451 adults were enrolled – that is a total of more than 1,100 people that now have health coverage that previously did not. In addition, there were at least 253 additional “status checks” done for individuals who were not sure whether or not they had coverage.

## Community Organizational Partners:

UWGKC is currently working in partnership with seven community nonprofit organizations across United Way’s five-county region to increase health care coverage and access for this region. At the beginning of 2011, competitive grants were awarded to continue to conduct outreach and enrollment activities that connect eligible children and their parents to existing public health insurance.

### Essential Facts: The Need

- In 2009, nearly 208,000 people in the five-county area were uninsured.
- Significant numbers of people live with the uncertainty of no health care coverage in all five counties:
  - Cass County, Mo – 10,900 residents (11%)
  - Clay County, MO – 21,800 residents (10%)
  - Jackson County, MO – 117,100 residents (17%)
  - Platte County, MO – 5,600 residents (6%)
  - Johnson County, KS – 52,300 residents (11%)
- 29,900 children and youth (0-17) are uninsured. From a high of 18,800 in Jackson County and 6,600 in Johnson County to approximately 2,000 each in Cass and Clay Counties with the lowest number of uninsured children at 345 in Platte County.

### Essential Facts: The Benefits of Investing

- Good childhood health aids educational attainment; at the same time poor childhood health is linked to negative impacts on adult health and limits adult employment opportunities.
- Research documents that children benefit from health insurance because they are more likely to have access to a usual source of care, and because serious childhood health problems are more likely to be identified and diagnosed early to prevent serious health conditions.

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