



**Communities Connect**

*Better Health for More People at Less Cost*



**Briefing Paper**  
**Senate Bill 5100 - Regarding Health Insurance Information for Students**  
(As of 2/12/2007)

**General Background**

SB 5100 requires that public and private schools inquire at student registration if a student has health insurance coverage. The bill also mandates schools to provide basic information about state programs to uninsured (or status unknown) families.

Many Communities Connect members including the Whatcom Alliance for Healthcare have developed and are operating model school outreach programs. The Alliance program includes school board agreements with six districts, tested outreach strategies, well designed collateral materials, and a simple tracking and reporting system that informs ongoing improvement efforts. The whole enterprise is a community partnership between the Whatcom Alliance and area schools. (See attached information sheet.)

**SB 5100 Bill Analysis**

We believe that the bill's intent to mandate schools to collect coverage information at registration, and to do follow-up mailings aimed at providing families information about state programs is a positive step toward ensuring that children who are eligible for state programs get covered. Because of the reporting requirements to the OPS it also provides a measure of the number of uninsured children in the State which is not available now.

The concern we have with the bill is that it appears to put the burden of finding families in need of coverage and following up with families solely on the schools. Communities Connect would request that the Senate respectfully consider the following minor changes to insure that the bill builds on the good work that is already happening across the state.

- Include language that allows for community partnerships to share the burden with school districts to not only collect the data and provide information but promote the idea of securing coverage for the whole family.
- At a minimum we would ask that the bill not undermine existing community efforts that have proven to be very successful.

Given the above points we propose the following changes to the bill:

**28A.210 RCW New Section. Sec. 1.** (1) Beginning with the 2007-08 school year, as part of a public or private school's enrollment process, the school shall annually inquire whether a student has health insurance. If a student's parent or guardian indicates that a student does not have health insurance coverage or does not indicate whether the student has or does not have health insurance, the school district, **or a designated organization under formal agreement** with the school district, shall provide the parent or guardian with information about the existence of the Medicaid and children's health insurance program and how to get additional information about the programs.

(2) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall work with the department of health, **and “Community Health Care Collaborative” grant recipients who have proven outreach services to schools**, in developing a one-page informational sheet that contains the information schools are required to provide to parents under subsection (1) of this section and make that informational sheet available to schools

These proposed amendments are consistent with the **“Blue Ribbon Commission on Healthcare Costs and Access” Recommendation #12:** Ensure the health of the next generation by linking insurance coverage with policies that improve children’s health

- *Partner with schools and other organizations to provide information on private and public sector insurance options available to families (pg. 13 of the report)*

**Contact Information:** *Holly Detzler*, Coordinator, Communities Connect  
(360) 493-5566, e-mail: [detzlerh@crhn.org](mailto:detzlerh@crhn.org) or  
*Chris Phillips*, Co-Director, Whatcom Alliance for Healthcare Access  
(360) 715-6548, e-mail: [cphillips@peacehealth.org](mailto:cphillips@peacehealth.org)

# WAHA School Outreach Summary



WAHA school outreach is a partnership between area schools and the Whatcom Alliance for Healthcare Access, a non-profit organization formed by community leaders and healthcare organizations to promote healthcare access in Whatcom County.

Operating from the assumption that healthy kids are better learners, WAHA seeks to provide all families with the information and assistance they need to provide their children with health insurance and a “medical home”. In order to maximize the work done by school nurses, Readiness-to-Learn coordinators, social workers and other school staff, WAHA offers the following services:

- Screen families for Medicaid and Basic Health insurance eligibility
- Provide families with information on available commercial plans, including Health Savings Accounts
- Offer assistance with application paperwork and verifications
- Help families find a medical home and access other healthcare services

## How it Works...

- Letter of Agreement establishes the partnership and explicitly protects confidentiality.
- District chooses from a menu of proven outreach strategies.
- Main contact person is identified in the District to facilitate communication and meetings.
- School staff help WAHA tailor the chosen strategies to their systems & processes and to develop other unique, effective strategies.
- Progress reports help WAHA and the District learn which strategies are most effective and continue to streamline processes

This partnership allows us to ensure that a child’s educational outcomes are not hindered by a lack of access to the healthcare they need.

~ Dr. Roger Lehnert, Ferndale School District



## Why Schools Participate

- Healthy Kids are Better Learners.
- Families of all incomes levels have health insurance needs and options.
- WAHA does not charge Districts or clients for their services.
- Minimum school staff time is required.
- Families’ privacy and confidentiality are strictly protected.
- WAHA outreach at schools is convenient for parents and reaches those for whom transportation is a barrier.
- Building on the relationships that schools have with families, WAHA can provide culturally-appropriate outreach to groups like Nooksack and Lummi tribal members, Spanish and Russian speakers, and many others in our community.

## More Information...

## 1. **How families are referred:**

### ▪ **Kindergarten & New Student Registration**

Families are asked if the student has health insurance and a primary care doctor. Those that do not are referred to WAHA.

### ▪ **Sports Registration**

Athletes must have health insurance to play sports. WAHA helps families get insurance and the required sports physical.

### ▪ ***Free & Reduced Lunch application***

Families who request health insurance information on their application receive a follow-up phone call by WAHA a week after information is mailed out.

### ▪ **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Teachers are often the first to notice when health issues impact learning. A simple referral will connect those families to WAHA for assistance in getting medical or dental services, as well as health insurance.

### ▪ **Getting the message out**

Posters, brochures, letters, websites, and newsletters are examples of the ways parents come in contact with WAHA and its services.

### ▪ **School Nurses**

WAHA staff can support school nurses as they identify children who need and are not accessing health services, whether due to lack of coverage or problems navigating the health care system.

## 2. **Health insurance options for families:**

- Basic Health Plan: open to all income-eligible Washington residents
- Medicaid: most children, pregnant women, those with disabilities, low-income parents
- Comprehensive and Catastrophic commercial plans
- Health Savings Accounts
- Bridge Assistance, a charity care program of St. Joseph Hospital
- Medicare and supplemental coverage

## 3. **Why is a medical home important for kids?**

A medical home addresses how a primary health care professional works in partnership with a family/patient to assure that all of the medical and non-medical needs of the patient are met. A medical home is defined as primary care that is accessible, continuous, comprehensive, family centered, coordinated, compassionate, and culturally effective. American Academy of Pediatrics