

February 2003

METROMONITOR



METROPLUS HEALTH PLAN, INC. PROVIDER NEWSLETTER

A Message from the Medical Director

This edition of our newsletter contains some mandated notices, as well as information on member retention and materials we have available for hearing and visually impaired individuals. I would like to focus your attention on the article about member eligibility verification. We have had a number of recent issues where members were turned away for not presenting a valid membership card. Please make use of our Fax Recall System or call our Member Services Department as a way of verifying eligibility.

Best Regards,
Arnold Saperstein, M.D.

MEMBER RETENTION

As MetroPlus membership continues to grow rapidly, one of the areas that we are continuously striving to improve is the retention of members. Currently, MetroPlus has a dedicated unit that is responsible for outreach to our existing Child Health Plus B members whose memberships are due to expire. Households are contacted by mail and phone and are sent pre-printed application packets. The notices instruct the member to contact our office directly or to go to one of our many designated sites. However, in our efforts, we have found that even more outreach is necessary, especially to members who have changed their residence or telephone number.

We would like to incorporate our primary care offices in this effort of retaining insurance for our members - your patients. Here are a few tips that you may implement in this joint effort:

- Remind members of their renewal date, which is one year from the effective date marked on the MetroPlus card, when they are in your office for scheduled appointments.
- Assist with scheduling appointments for membership renewal by providing members with our Customer Services Department telephone number. Customer Services representatives can be reached at **1-800-475-METRO (6387)**, Monday through Friday between 9:00 A.M. and 7:00 P.M. and on Saturdays between 10:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. By calling Customer Services, you may also obtain a list of our many sites to share with the members.

- If there is a MetroPlus representative in your office, that representative can assist the member with the recertification application.

- Encourage members to inform us about address and telephone number changes, if they have indicated this during their appointment, or have your office call or send an E-mail letting us know.

- Host retention seminars or workshops for existing members at your facility. *For further information, please contact Indira Liebert, Manager of Recertification, at 212-597-8633.*

This is just the beginning to finding innovative ways to keep our members insured. We would like to take the opportunity to invite you and your staff to work with us to ensure that your patients who are MetroPlus members continue to receive continuous high quality healthcare services.

Note: The city has streamlined the Family Health Plus/Medicaid recertification process; therefore, some of your patients may come to you seeking assistance. Please encourage them to fill out the proper forms and return them with all the required documents in the supplied business reply envelope to HRA.

If members require assistance with completing the forms or are unsure what documents they need to send, you should direct them to one of the facilitated enrollment sites on the list enclosed in their package or to the MetroPlus Marketing Representative, if there is one at your location. Members may also call the HealthStat phone line at 1-888-692-6116 with questions regarding their application.

MATERIALS FOR HEARING AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED INDIVIDUALS

As you are aware, MetroPlus Health Plan has an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance Plan approved by the State and City Departments of Health. As part of that plan, we have developed several resources available to hearing and visually impaired individuals. Resources include copies of member handbooks for the Medicaid Managed Care, Child Health Plus (CHP) and Family Health Plus (FHP) lines of business in the following formats:

- Braille versions
- Audiocassettes in English
- Audiocassettes in Spanish.

If you require copies of these materials, please contact Evelyn Corcino in the Customer Services Department, at (212) 597-8642.

In addition, please be reminded that we have staff trained in American Sign Language available for members visiting our office, as well as access to translation services for persons with limited English proficiency.

We hope you will find these resources helpful in our shared goal of providing exceptional customer service to MetroPlus Health Plan members and prospective members with disabilities.

NEW GENERIC DRUGS ON THE MARKET

Many new generic medications have become available over the last few months. The generic equivalent of Augmentin, Amoxicillin/Clavulanate is now marketed in the following strengths: 500mg & 875mg oral tablets, 200mg & 400mg oral suspension & chewable tablets.

Other commonly prescribed medications include: Glucophage (Metformin), Ceftin (Cefuroxime) Axid (Nizatidine), Prinivil and Zestril (Lisinopril), Prinzide & Zestoretic (Lisinopril and Hydro-chlorothiazide), Cytotec (Misoprostol), Zanaflex (Tizanidine), and Demadex (Torsemide). Generic medications are generally priced ten to fifty percent below the price of brand name products.

NEW EXCLUSION ON CHILD HEALTH PLUS PHARMACY BENEFIT

Federal regulations issued pursuant to Title XXI of the Social Security Act require that insurers exclude coverage of prescription drugs and biologicals administered for the purpose of euthanasia or mercy killing from the Child Health Plus benefit package.

If you have ideas or suggestions for the next issue of the MetroMonitor, please call the MetroPlus Provider Relations Department at (212) 730-3206.

MEMBER ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION

The eligibility of MetroPlus members should be confirmed before all non-emergent patient visits. Members must be eligible on the date of service for payment to be rendered. At the time of each visit, the membership card should be presented to confirm the identity of the member.

If a patient presents for services without a membership card and says that he or she is a MetroPlus member, the Provider must still verify eligibility using one of the eligibility verification methods described below. Members who have transferred from one Primary Care Provider (PCP) to another may have not yet received their new cards which show the name of their new PCP. Eligibility for these members must be verified as well.

In order to verify up-to-date eligibility, you should use one of the following methods:

- Our Fax Recall system, available twenty-four hours per day, Monday through Saturday. If you have a fax machine, call the designated Fax Recall number at (212) 730-6555 and follow the prompts. A fax containing the member's eligibility status will be sent back to you within minutes.

- If you experience problems with the Fax Recall system, you may also verify the member's eligibility by calling the Member Services Department at 1-800-303-9626 (TDD: 1-800-881-2812).

- For Medicaid, Family Health Plus, and HIV SNP members, the Medicaid CIN may be used to check eligibility on-site through the online Electronic Medicaid Eligibility Verification System (EMEVS). If you do not have access to this online system at your location, you may obtain the information by calling the automated New York State EMEVS telephone verification line (1-800-997-1111) and providing them with the MetroPlus Provider Number (01529762) and the Plan Code (092).

FLU AND COLD SEASON

During the cold and flu season, many members will be visiting their Provider looking for prescriptions to treat the cold or flu.

The following medications are covered by MetroPlus Health Plan for Child Health Plus and Family Health Plus members: Loratadine or Diphenhydramine for the relief of runny nose and sneezing, Pseudoephedrine for nasal congestion, Guaifenesin DM for coughing and chest congestion, and over-the-counter pain and fever relievers. These MetroPlus-covered products offer symptomatic relief for patients when prescription medication may not be appropriate. MetroPlus Medicaid members can get these medications by using their Medicaid card.