

LETTER FROM A TEXAS CHIP MOM OCTOBER 2006

As a parent who has children who were caught in the “endless loop” of applying for CHIP I feel the need to clarify a few things. First and foremost, the current system is failing our children. Everyone seems to agree on that but few other than the staff at the Children’s Defense Fund seem to agree on how to fix it. The first thing that has to be corrected is the lack of communication between intake personnel who process the applications and workers at the call center. When a parent calls the center to check status they get mixed feedback because the system is not accurately updated when applications are processed. The notes that are being left in the computerized files are not sufficient to give parents the information needed. During the time my children’s applications were in limbo I called on three different occasions and was told three different stories every time. It took someone physically pulling up the documents to see what the problem was. At no time was I sent a letter telling me there was a problem. This is the second part of the system that is failing our children. Applicants are either belatedly informed of application problems or not informed at all. When they don’t respond in a timely matter the application is cancelled and parents have to start all over.

The paperwork is confusing in the first place because when the applications are printed from the computer the signature lines are often tacked on to the top or bottom of a page and not easily noticeable. Also, they give examples of what verification is needed and then refuse to accept it when it is given. This of course is only discovered after the parent has waited months for a response only to call the call center to be told that they were denied because of missing paperwork. This problem is further exacerbated by the fact that the call center employees are often rude and unsympathetic to the parents’ stress. It isn’t that the forms are hard to fill out; it is that once they are filled out and turned in the staff at Accenture does not process them correctly. They are not even on the same page as to what is acceptable proof and what isn’t. If they don’t know what is ok and what isn’t, how are parents supposed to know?

If Barbara Best and her staff had not intervened in my case my son would be dead by now. When no one else would help they took the time to care and get things done. I will never be able to thank them enough for quite literally saving my child’s life. That is the point that the politicians and management of the contractor are not seeing. This isn’t just an issue of children being inconvenienced and having to wait a little longer for health coverage. This is a matter of LIFE and DEATH for many Texas children. This is a matter of the parents having to look at themselves each day and feeling like they have failed their children. They see them suffering but cannot do anything to help because their hands are tied. I have to wonder how many parents are watching their children suffer because they don’t know they have a voice. Those parents who don’t know there is someone who can help them. The saddest fact of all is that it shouldn’t be that way; we live in a country where our children shouldn’t have to suffer. The fact that we have a program in place but children are being unjustly denied benefits should boil every Texans blood.

Sincerely,
Karen L. Rohrer