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### **SCDHHS Launches Medicaid Choice Campaign**

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) is launching a campaign to inform Medicaid beneficiaries that they will soon have the option to choose their own health plans. About 560,000 Medicaid beneficiaries statewide will be eligible to participate in the agency's *Healthy Connections Choices* program, which will rollout over the next 18 months.

A kick-off luncheon detailing the program is scheduled for Tuesday, August 21 from 10 a.m.--1 p.m. at the SC Hospital Association, located at 1000 Center Point Road in Columbia.

*Healthy Connections Choices* is part of the state's overall Medicaid reform plan and is designed to get a better return on South Carolina's health care investment. Through partnerships with managed care organizations, Medical Home Networks and special enrollment counselors, SCDHHS seeks to increase care coordination and disease prevention methods not found in traditional Medicaid. Those who choose to enroll in a health plan also will establish crucial relationships with a primary care doctor. Currently, many Medicaid beneficiaries are left to navigate the health care system on their own, leading many to seek only sporadic care or emergency services.

"By encouraging increased education and valuable one-on-one time with primary care physicians, we assist Medicaid patients to actively participate in their health management," said SC Department of Health and Human Services Director Emma Forkner. "Choosing the health plan that offers the right combination of delivery services for the individual or family is a significant step for the Medicaid population. We anticipate many of our beneficiaries will learn to manage chronic diseases and adopt healthy behaviors and lifestyles. Our goal is a healthier Medicaid population for South Carolina."

Under *Healthy Connections Choices*, participants will receive the same benefits as those in traditional Medicaid, and also extra services offered through the individual plans. These may include benefits such as unlimited doctor visits, eyeglasses and dental care for adults, smoking cessation classes and programs tailored for those with specific diseases.

Medicaid beneficiaries will receive enrollment information detailing various plan options beginning August 27 in the Midlands. Enrollment in a plan is voluntary, but those who do not make an active choice—either by choosing a plan or opting to stay in traditional Medicaid—will have one chosen for them. Those dissatisfied with their plan will have 90 days to select a new one.

Aside from direct mailings to beneficiaries, the *Healthy Connections Choices* awareness campaign will include outreach through community groups and radio, television and print media outlets. Through a partnership with Maximus, Inc., special enrollment counselors will be available to help Medicaid beneficiaries select a plan that's best for them. Please visit [www.scdhhs.gov](http://www.scdhhs.gov) for more information and a list of plans currently available.

About 60 percent of Medicaid beneficiaries nationwide are now enrolled in some form of managed care. South Carolina's initiative is unique because it uses market-based principles—choice and competition—to encourage a high level of accountability and value from the plans. Medicaid managed care plans have been available in South Carolina since 1996, and currently enroll about 150,000 beneficiaries.

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