



Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers



This informational sheet has been developed in response to questions received by the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers (League) about Massachusetts Health Care Reform and the Connecticut River Valley Farmworker Health Program (CRVFHP).

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The 2006 Health Care Reform Law requires most Massachusetts residents age 18 or older to have health insurance by Dec. 31, 2007. Most individuals without health coverage at the end of 2007 will be ineligible for their individual exemption when they file their 2007 Massachusetts income tax return. The penalty for being uninsured will increase significantly in 2008.

EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES

Employers with 11 or more full-time-equivalent employees must offer a Section 125 Plan that meets Health Connector regulations. Section 125 Plans let employees save money through pre-tax payments for health coverage. The employers will pay the Free Rider Surcharge if employees or their dependents get medical care that is paid by the state's Free Care Pool for the uninsured. They must also make a "fair and reasonable" contribution to their employees' health insurance or pay a "Fair Share Contribution" of up to \$295 per employee. These employers must also complete an Employer "Health Insurance Responsibility Disclosure" (HIRD) to report whether they offer a Section 125 Plan and must collect an Employee HIRD from employees who decline employer-sponsored health insurance or the employer's Section 125 Plan.

Employers with fewer than 11 full-time-equivalent employees are exempt from most employer requirements of the new Health Reform Law. These employers may still want to set up Section 125 Plan for their employees – it will reduce taxes for both the employer and the employees – and can also purchase health insurance through the Health Connector.

There are many other significant details employers should be aware of. For more information, visit the Health Connector's website: <http://www.mahealthconnector.org>. The following link is to a "Frequently Asked Questions" page for employers: <http://www.mahealthconnector.org/portal/site/connector/menuitem.d6907c916713afde505da95c0ce08041/?fiShown=default>. Also, the Health Connector's Employer Handbook is available at: <http://www.mahealthconnector.org/portal/binary/com.epicentric.contentmanagement.servlet.ContentDeliveryServlet/FindInsurance/Employer/Overview/Employer%2520Handbook.pdf>.

ABOUT THE CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY FARMWORKER HEALTH PROGRAM

The CRVFHP is a program supported by a grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration, a federal agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and is managed by the League. The CRVFHP pays for defined primary health care and outreach services to eligible uninsured migrant and seasonal farmworkers and dependents.

A migrant farmworker is someone whose principal employment is seasonal farm work and who moves to temporary housing to seek farm work; a seasonal farmworker is an individual whose employment is in agriculture on a seasonal basis (as opposed to year-round employment) but does not establish a temporary home for the purposes of employment. The CRVFHP is offered through participating health centers and other health care providers in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

The CRVFHP is not an insurance program and not a replacement for employer-sponsored insurance. For more information about the CRVFHP, visit: www.massleague.org/CRVFHP.