



Medical and Health Research Association of New York City, Inc.

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OPEN THIS ENVELOPE AND STAY COVERED
NEW MHRA PROGRAM WILL HELP CHINESE IMMIGRANTS IN
QUEENS RETAIN HEALTH INSURANCE

Many Now Inadvertently Lose Coverage When Asked to Renew

New York – Chinese immigrants in Flushing, Queens will learn in their native language about the importance of renewing their public health insurance through a new initiative to be led by Medical and Health Research Association of New York City (MHRA). According to a study done by the NYS Coalition of Prepaid Health Services, Chinese immigrants who do not speak English are 12 percent more likely to lose their coverage at the time of renewal than other public insurance beneficiaries in New York.¹

“Many in the Chinese-speaking community lose health insurance for reasons that are entirely preventable,” explained Sherlina Nageer, MHRA Deputy Director of Public Health Programs. “They are often not aware that their insurance needs to be renewed and do not always recognize or understand the official packet of renewal forms they receive in the mail.” This lack of awareness means that many people do not ‘open the envelope,’ delaying or not responding at all to the renewal notice. As a result, too many lose their public health insurance coverage and become uninsured until they again complete the lengthy application process.

The “Open This Envelope and Stay Covered” initiative, which is funded through a grant from the New York State Health Foundation, will be launched in the Spring of 2008. It will feature community-wide print and outdoor media advertising; the establishment of a ‘Health Insurance Renewal Hotline’ operated by bi-lingual program staff; a variety of outreach and education activities in the Flushing community; and one-on-one assistance in Chinese, including any needed explanation of what is written in the renewal documents. Partners for the initiative will include local retailers, social service agencies and community organizations.

New York City Council Member John Liu, who represents this community, has pledged his support for the new

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¹ Boozang, Patricia, Braslow, Laura, Fiori Anthony, “Enrollment Churning in Medicaid: Coverage Gaps Undermine the Managed Care System and Continuity of Care for Chronically Ill Individuals,” NYS Coalition of Prepaid Health Services, December 2006. Available online at: http://www.manatthealthsolutions.com/publications/articles/Enrollment_Churning.pdf. Accessed on 7/27/07

initiative. “By increasing awareness of the importance of staying insured and providing one-on-one assistance to needy families, this initiative will reduce the high rate of coverage losses among people who cannot afford to go without health insurance,” he said. Council Member Liu is familiar with and also supports the work of the MHRA/Health Insurance Enrollment Program, which helps low-income New Yorkers obtain health insurance.

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Medical and Health Research Association of New York City (MHRA) is a nonprofit organization that develops, implements and advocates dynamic solutions to prevent disease and improve community health. MHRA conducts comprehensive research providing insight on public health issues, creates and manages community health programs, and provides services to organizations to address public health challenges.