

Outreach

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Why Do We Need Outreach?

Many families and individuals may need assistance completing applications, navigating the process and/or understanding the value of comprehensive health insurance. You may be just the right person to reach out to them and make the difference!

You can help people overcome these and other barriers like:

- Confusion about when to apply (*anytime!*)
- Obtaining required documentation (*including proof of income, like pay stubs from multiple jobs or documenting income from seasonal work; unemployment income; Social Security benefits; and a birth certificate to verify identity and citizenship*)
- Low literacy or speaking English as a second language
- Understanding the value of having health insurance
- Pride or stigma about receiving government benefits
- Understanding and completing the required annual renewal process
- Understanding program changes

Now that you know the ins and outs of how to help people apply, this section of the Tool Kit contains effective strategies for connecting with individuals and families who may be eligible for Virginia's Medicaid or FAMIS programs and encouraging them to apply.

You can print or order outreach materials and the application and its components from DMAS for free via the Cover Virginia Website. For outreach materials go to: <https://coverva.dmas.virginia.gov/partners/outreach-materials/>. For the application and its components go to: <https://coverva.dmas.virginia.gov/apply/applications/>

How You Can Help

One thing is critical to the success of the outreach efforts - multiple touch points with individuals and families. People need to see and hear information about a program multiple times before they are moved to act. And, targeted community-based efforts to reach people where they live, work, learn, play and pray are critical to make sure everyone who is eligible gets and stays enrolled.

Talk to the People You Know

Connecting people to Medicaid and FAMIS is all about relationships. Reach out to people you already know or who have a connection with those who may be eligible.

- ***Start with your family and friends.*** Many of us know individuals and families who may be eligible for Medicaid or FAMIS. Talk to those close to home - family, friends, and neighbors. Family members, particularly moms, are among the most influential in encouraging people to apply.
- ***Check where you work.*** Does your employer provide health insurance? Is the employee share of it affordable? Does your employer have "contract", temporary, or part-time workers who may not be eligible for benefits? Employers can share information about Medicaid and FAMIS upon hire, at open enrollment for benefits, at key life events (birth/adoption, marriage, divorce) or when employees leave the company.
- ***Consider your clubs, organizations, and associations.*** Most civic, social groups want to support their members and their families. Can you make a presentation to the group about Medicaid and FAMIS, put an article in the newsletter, or distribute Cover Virginia printed materials? Would members help get the word out or help people apply?
- ***Involve your faith community.*** Access to health care is a priority in some congregations as a special project or mission or through a health ministry. Effective outreach strategies range from arranging for special "sign-up days," educating the congregation through a bulletin insert, or presenting at a group meeting.
- ***Encourage your child's school to educate staff and families.*** Schools know that a healthy family is critical to student success. Make sure the front office or nurse's office has Medicaid/FAMIS information prominently displayed that direct parents to someone who can give them more information about how to apply. Distribute information at school events (registration, Back-to-School Night, science fair, sports games, and concerts). It is not unusual for some school staff to find that they themselves are eligible!

How to Find People in the Community

Connecting people to Medicaid and FAMIS is all about relationships. Reach out to people you already know or who have a connection with those who may be eligible.

- **Housing Partners.** Contact management at apartment communities where potentially-eligible Virginians may live. Ask them to include information in welcome packets. See if they would display Cover Virginia brochures and posters in common areas of apartment buildings (lobbies, laundry rooms) or the rental office, the community pool, park or playground.
- **Employer Partners.** While about half of potentially-eligible Virginians work, many are self-employed, independent contractors, work in seasonal jobs or for employers that do not offer health insurance. Employer types to consider contacting include: hospitality, hairdressers, barbers, restaurants, day care facilities, landscaping, trades (plumbing, electric), day labor, and workforce training programs. Reach the self-employed or independent contractors where they purchase or rent work-related equipment or supplies. You can also reach out to your local Virginia Employment Commission Virginia Workforce Center.
- **Retail Partners.** Ask managers and owners of businesses where those who are potentially-eligible shop at regularly if they would display Cover Virginia brochures or posters. Consider these retail partners: thrift stores, gas station and convenience stores, supermarkets, car parts stores, drug stores and Walmart.
- **Recreation Opportunities.** Places people to go have fun or relax are another opportunity to reach potentially-eligible Virginians. Consider these potential opportunities: professional, community or school sporting events, gyms, movie theaters, libraries and community centers.
- **Community Organizations.** Contact leaders at local nonprofit agencies that serve people who may be eligible for Medicaid or FAMIS. Most communities have a food bank, income tax assistance programs, Head Start, re-entry programs, Goodwill, Salvation Army, volunteer fire and rescue organizations, parent support groups or housing-related organizations. Encourage them to provide information about Medicaid and FAMIS to clients, train key staff so they can answer questions and direct clients to application assistance or even build application assistance into the services they provide to clients and their families. Some nonprofit employees and their family members may be eligible for coverage, too!

Tip: Strong relationships with community partners are a key to effective outreach. The success of outreach partnerships is about the relationship between two organizations and their respective staffs. They include: shared organizational goals and values (importance of health and health insurance), supportive leadership and staff and comfort with the individuals and families needing help. Effective communication between partners is critical.



Reach People at Events

Host special enrollment events, offering people help completing the application on site. Set up tables at a pop up or temporary enrollment site (maybe a “Sign Up Saturdays” at a library or church), publicize it and have assisters available to provide help as consumers work on applications. Be sure to tell people to bring proof of income, and birth certificates or citizenship documents, so they have the key information needed to apply.

Community events (health fairs, cultural events) are one way to raise awareness about Medicaid and FAMIS and the availability of application assistance. To increase the impact of participation in events, provide a “commit card” to people who stop by the table or booth so they can leave their name, contact information and permission for you to follow-up with them after the event to offer application assistance.

- A highly effective way to start talking with people about Medicaid or FAMIS at events is to ask “if they have heard about Medicaid Expansion coverage for adults”. During the conversation ask if anyone they know is uninsured.
- If you prepare brochures or flyers for people who may be eligible, be sure they are simple and easy to read.

Tips to Make 1:1 Assistance Most Effective

Many people need help applying for Medicaid or FAMIS. This is especially true for people who are not native English speakers, have limited education or low literacy skills. Here are some solid steps you can take to help them complete and submit their application.

Help Complete the Application

- Provide a list of “what to bring to your appointment”, so applications can be completed in one sitting.
- Help the family or the individual contact the Cover Virginia Call Center to apply or help them complete the *Application for Health Coverage & Help Paying Costs* on CommonHelp or a paper application.
- Help them gather needed verifications and make copies of them.
- Let them know what letters they may get from DSS or Cover Virginia and offer to help them follow up with the next steps.
- Create easy to remember usernames and passwords for CommonHelp applications. Give the applicant a form to write them on, and the answers to the security questions they set up, so they can log in later.

Be a Go-between for the Applicant with the Cover Virginia Call Center and Central Processing Unit or the Local DSS

- Have the applicant fill in the middle section of Appendix C on the paper Application, or in the appropriate place on the online application, so you can discuss their case with DSS or the Call Center on their behalf.
- Ask the applicant to complete a consent form, giving the assister permission to help them with the application process.
- If you help families/individuals apply on paper via the LDSS, get to know the eligibility workers and how they prefer you to submit applications to them.
- If the family’s application is denied and they don’t understand why, help them call their local DSS or the Cover VA Call Center and talk with a worker or supervisor. If the applicant wants to appeal the denial, help them file and prepare for the appeal.

After Enrollment

- Teach the individual/family about using health insurance
- Once enrolled, the person/family must choose a Managed Care Organization (MCO) and a doctor. Make sure they understand that they can choose another physician and/or MCO from the one listed on the initial enrollment letter from DMAS.

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- Encourage the family/individual to use the preventive health and dental care available to them, as well as going to the doctor when they're sick.
 - Demonstrate the comparison tool on the website showing the extra benefits each MCO provides so they can factor that into their decision.

Remind the Individual/Family about Their Responsibilities

- Tell them that they need to inform local DSS, or Cover VA, within 10 days if they have a change of address or phone number or a change in family circumstances that could affect eligibility. Important things to report are: a raise/cut in pay, a family member moving into or out of the home; or if the family/person moves.
- Let them know that they must renew their eligibility after 12 months. Tell them to open all mail from the local Department of Social Services, the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services, or Cover Virginia when it arrives.

Stay Connected with Other Assisters

- Network with other assisters to share best practices, work arounds for system challenges, and stay up-to-date with policy changes.
- Share information with other assisters in your community about where and when events are planned to prevent gaps and overlaps in outreach and enrollment efforts. Consider hosting some events together, as appropriate, to share the work and cost.

