

CASE STUDY: Medical Legal Partnership (MLP)**COLLEGE of NURSING**
EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY**TJC's Partner:****A Federally Qualified Health Center**

Since 1990, the College Of Nursing has established a network of nurse-managed practice sites that now provide nearly 30,000 primary care and outreach visits each year to underserved clients in the upper northeast Tennessee region. Nurse-managed health care is currently being delivered in clinics located in Johnson City, Washington County, Mountain City (Johnson County) and Sneedville (Hancock County).

The practices are funded by capitation, revenue generation, community organizations, hospitals, local, state and federal grants, and service contracts. The Faculty Practice Network has an annual budget of 3.7 million dollars.

The Office of Practice of the College of Nursing provides the administration and infrastructure support for the Faculty Practice Network and the nurse-managed clinics.

The Opportunity:**Eligible, But Uninsured Population**

The passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) ushered in a new era of opportunity for the uninsured to receive health coverage. Specifically, changes in existing Medicaid eligibility, and the availability of premium tax credits, created new funding sources for many of the clinic's clients. After reviewing data, the clinic found 750 children that were believed to be "eligible, but uninsured."

"This partnership makes a huge difference for our patients. It also helps our clinic's finances.

According to our research, the CHC could see a 463% increase in reimbursement for future visits as a result of these efforts.

Previously, the patients served had no insurance and the costs of care were absorbed by the clinic."

Dr. Patricia Vanhook, Associate Dean,
Office of Patient Practice, College of Nursing

The Challenge:**Complex Medicaid Law in Tennessee**

Problems with the state's information technology system and the elimination of in-person application assistance formerly performed by the Department of Human Services resulted in (and continues to be) a barrier to health coverage for many families. The clinic realized to effectively address the uninsured population, ETSU needed the legal expertise and experience of the TJC.

The Solution:**TJC & ETSU Medical Legal Partnership**

Deciding to focus on the child patients initially, the clinic and the TJC worked together to implement an advocacy plan from the initial application phase to enrollment including appeals, if necessary. The MLP focused on improving TennCare enrollment outcomes and case management efficiencies.

CASE STUDY: Medical Legal Partnership (MLP)**MLP's Key Components:**

- **Initial Screening Process Review** – performed a comprehensive review of the clinic's current screening process for uninsured patients.
- **Staff Education** – conducted trainings that focus on spotting issues with regard to potential areas of coverage, when and how to apply, as well as the types of information needed to build a record of support for a patient's application.
- **Difficult Case Troubleshooting** – received expert technical assistance with enrollment issues, including the management of appeals.

Case Management:

Applications for health coverage were initiated by clinic staff. An application record was created that documented important aspects of the application process including the date, method for applying and any follow-up correspondence received. The TJC monitored due process issues and assisted patients with the appeal process, including hearings, when necessary. Inappropriate denials and incorrect coverage dates were some of the common issues that were favorably addressed.

Patient Impact

- Preventative & wellness care
- Episodic illness visits
- Vaccinations
- Access to specialty care
- Decreased family stress
- Decreased financial strain

The Results – By the Numbers

From November 1, 2015 to May 31, 2016, the results were overwhelmingly positive. The number of uninsured patients dropped from 61.3% to 39.7%. A total of 816 patients were screened, and 433 applications for insurance were submitted with 383 patients enrolled into coverage.

22% Reduction in
the Uninsured**Increased Enrollment**

Effective enrollment practices resulted in 226 children being enrolled into TennCare or CoverKids. Although not a specific target group of the MLP, 157 adults were enrolled into health coverage as well. Many of these adults were identified as parents and determined eligible under the newly revamped Caretaker Relative category of TennCare.

226/157

Children

Adults

Clinic Sustainability

Medicaid reimbursement for services rendered is important to the clinic's sustainability. Research shows that for each patient enrolled in Medicaid coverage, the clinic could receive a 463% increase in reimbursement for future visits.

463% ↑