

May 2011

**A&SJ Committee
Mission Statement**

We promote social justice as central to all Daughter of Charity ministry. We move together with persons who are poor and marginalized from reflection to advocacy for systemic change.

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Advocating for Social Justice

Joint Newsletter of the
Daughters of Charity Advocacy & Social Justice Committee USA

PRIMER ON MEDICAID—PART 1

By *Sr. Kathleen Natwin and
Mary Ella Payne, Ascension Health*

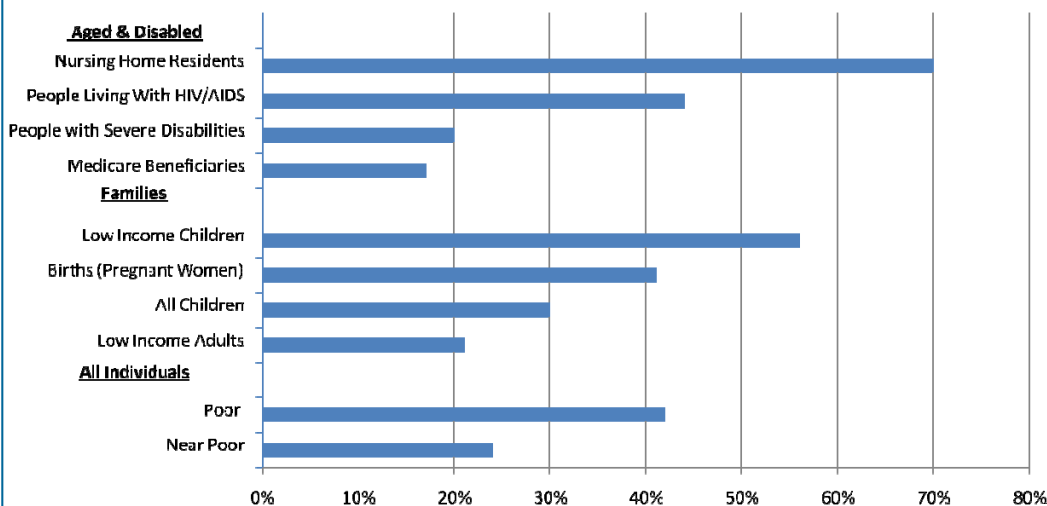
The Medicaid program provides vital safety-net financing for low-income Americans receiving acute health care, long-term care services and children receiving primary care. As of June 2010, Medicaid enrollment totaled 50 million people, which is more than the Medicare program. Medicaid covers 1 in 3 children, finances more than 1 in 3 births, covers 8 million people with disabilities, and is the primary payer for long-term care services, covering 43% of these expenditures nationally.

States administer the Medicaid program within a federal framework. To qualify for federal Medicaid funding, certain populations must be covered, while coverage of others is optional to the states. Some benefits are mandatory, but states are generally granted broad authority to define those benefits. For example, states must provide coverage of hospital care, but a state may elect to limit that coverage to a fixed number of days per year. With some exceptions, under the health reform law enacted in 2010 known as the Affordable Care Act (ACA), states may not reduce program enrollment by tightening eligibility standards for Medicaid prior to 2014.

Medicaid is a major component of both federal and state government expenditures, and is projected to grow as a result of overall rising health care costs and the aging of the baby boom population. In addition, after 2014 an estimated 16 million people will be newly enrolled in Medicaid as a result of the ACA coverage expansions, and these costs will almost entirely be borne by the federal government. In 2010, total federal expenditures on Medicaid represented almost 8% of the federal budget and are projected to reach 10% in 2021. On average, Medicaid accounts for 22% of state expenditures, more than K-12 education (21%).

Medicaid has a critical role for selected populations

Percent with Medicaid Coverage:



SOURCE: Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured and Urban Institute analysis of 2009 ASEC Supplement to the CPS; Birth data from *Maternal and Child Health Update: States Increase Eligibility for Children's Health in 2007*, National Governors Association, 2008; Medicare data from USDHHS.

Primer on Medicaid – Part 2

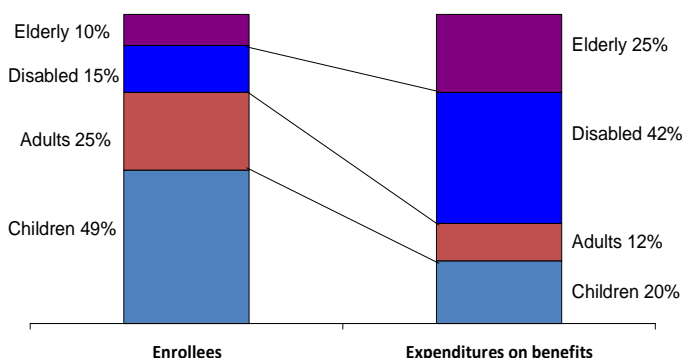
Sr. Kathleen Natwin and Mary Ella Payne

Program expenditures totaled \$366 billion in fiscal year 2009, \$243 billion of which was paid by the federal government and \$123 billion by the states. **The standard federal contribution toward a state's Medicaid expenses (the "matching rate" or "FMAP") is based on a formula using the state's per capita income. These federal matching rate percentages are at least 50% (the rate in 14 states) and grow as high as 76% (in Mississippi).** Federal matching rates were temporarily raised in 2009 under the federal stimulus legislation to assist states in meeting Medicaid costs during the recession; these extra funds were extended but expire in June of this year (2011).

The ACA Act. The ACA builds on the existing Medicaid program to ensure that coverage is available to all Americans with incomes under 133% of the federal poverty level – \$29,726 in 2011 for a family of four. (Undocumented persons will remain ineligible for Medicaid; legal immigrants generally must wait 5 years for eligibility.) The 16 million new enrollees will largely be low-income adults who are not disabled or pregnant and who do not have dependent children, a so-called "childless adult" population that is generally not eligible for Medicaid now. The number of new enrollees could be higher if the participation rate for all people eligible for Medicaid is increased; currently only about 60% of those eligible for the program actually enroll, although this varies among the states.

As more people gain Medicaid or private health coverage, the ACA would phase down and redirect – but not eliminate – the extra Medicaid payments made for hospitals that serve a disproportionate share of uninsured and low-income patients. These federal funds, which totaled \$8.1 billion in 2010, are critical to ensuring that safety net institutions are able to continue to serve our most vulnerable populations.

The elderly and disabled account for the majority of Medicaid spending



Source: Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured/Urban Institute estimated abased on 2007 MSIS and CMS64 data.

Medicaid issues in the states. For most states, the major focus of attention on Medicaid for the next few years will be managing program expenditures – that is, limiting or reducing benefits, provider payments, and possibly program enrollment. The 2008 recession has caused state revenue to decline at the same time that more people became eligible for Medicaid when they lost their jobs. Nationally, between 2008 and 2010, program enrollment increased by more than 7 million or about 18%, while state general fund revenue declined by 10%.

States facing budget shortfalls have been instituting reductions in Medicaid benefits and provider payments; this trend may accelerate in 2012 because the extra federal matching funds will no longer be available. Although technically the recession has ended, unemployment remains high and state budgets will continue to be challenged by revenue shortfalls for the foreseeable future. Some states are seeking waivers from the federal government or legislative changes in Congress that would eliminate the ACA "maintenance of eligibility" requirement to allow them to find savings by reducing Medicaid eligibility as well as limiting benefits and provider payments.

Medicaid and the 112th Congress. At the federal level, key Medicaid issues are the growth in program expenditures and the appropriate amount of state flexibility. As federal policy makers focus on reducing deficits and national debt, the projected long-term increases in Medicaid spending make the program a target for achieving federal budgetary savings. Several proposals would seek to cap federal funding for Medicaid in some way. This could be part of a broad cap on federal entitlement spending, or a Medicaid-specific cap. In particular, some proposals would "block grant" Medicaid. Some states favor this type of approach because it could offer them more flexibility in determining who is eligible for Medicaid, but the associated limits on federal spending could make it difficult for states to continue to finance needed services for vulnerable populations. Short of a block grant, some members of Congress are sympathetic to state requests for greater flexibility and elimination of the maintenance of eligibility requirements. Finally, as a key part of the health reform law, the planned expansion of Medicaid eligibility in 2014 is part of the controversial debate over repeal of the ACA.

DAWN'S PLACE – Philadelphia, PA

By Sr. Michelle Loisel, Director

Dawn's Place, a non-profit program and safe house in Philadelphia, supports and protects women victims of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. "Dawn" was a prostituted woman murdered in Camden, New Jersey. The "dawn" in Dawn's Place is also about rebirth. Their mission is to help residents experience the "dawning" of a new day and a new life.

Since March, 2009, twenty women have lived at Dawn's Place, eleven trafficked from other countries, and nine from Philadelphia. They are referred by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the FBI, other federal or local authorities, or social workers in correction facilities and drug rehab programs.

Residents work with staff to obtain needed support – addictions counseling, legal help, medical and mental health care. They have the opportunity to find safety, to regain a positive self-image through therapy, get a GED or begin a college course, learn English, develop life skills, find employment and housing, and begin again to trust themselves, other people and God.

Dawn's Place began with the vision of a group of religious women and lay people interested in social justice. They recognized that there was no residence available where trafficked and sexually exploited women could experience long-term healing and rehabilitation services. With the assistance of many individuals and groups from varied religious backgrounds, they opened and staffed this 10-bed safe house, developing individualized programs for residents.



*In any language,
Dawn's Place is a
new day, new heart,
new hope.*

"It's not just about getting off drugs or alcohol or getting independent from men," says one former sex worker. "It's about being what we should have been able to be all along. It's about hope."

Speaking tearfully at her farewell party at Dawn's Place, a trafficking victim said, "I knew from my life that there are many bad people in the world. At Dawn's Place, I learned that there are also many very good people, and I am so grateful to you all".



Dawn's Place is a lovely house made into a place of warmth and welcome. Residents shop, cook, and do housekeeping chores. They gradually form a caring community. A

few examples: Recently, a shy young Hispanic woman arrived with few belongings. In spite of the language barrier, residents welcomed her with gestures, smiles, and gifts – a sweater, a top, a scarf. At a discount clothing store, an African American resident guided two Indonesian women through the check out process. On any given day, one resident gives good advice to another about "letting go".

Dawn's Place staff members, Board of Directors and volunteers engage in community education events to raise awareness of the issues of prostitution. This includes outreach to vulnerable populations across the region.

For more information, see www.ahomefordawn.org

Celebrate WOMEN and GENDER equality!

Visit the CM—DC NGO website at <http://www.cmdcngo.org/become-involved.html>

- 1) Test your knowledge: take UNESCO's Gender Equality Quiz.
- 2) View the video "The Girl Effect" on the unique potential of 600 million adolescent girls to end poverty for themselves and the world.

For more information, contact Sisters Germaine Price and Pat Connolly at the United Nations.

The Cook Islands Adapt to Global Warming and Climate Change

By Sr. Margaret O'Dwyer

The Cook Islands are diligently planning to protect their “enua” (lands) and “moana” (ocean) from effects of global warming and climate change, even though they bear minimal responsibility for causing them.

“Big countries are into **mitigation**, but **adaptation** is our *only* choice,” said Deyna Marsh, Education and Awareness Coordinator for the Cook Islands National Environment Services. “Changes are already happening. Sea levels are rising all around the Pacific. If nothing is done now, we will lose our Islands, our traditions, our culture. Buildings and infrastructure on the foreshore will be lost or damaged, and both food security and the health of the people will be affected.”

A workshop held in Rarotonga, February 28 to March 4, produced a Cook Islands Climate Change Adaptation Plan. If the Plan is approved by managers of the Kyoto Protocol Climate Change Adaptation Fund, the Cook Islands could receive \$5 million in support.

Pasha Carruthers, Cook Islands National Environment Service’s Island Futures Manager and organizer of the workshop, says global warming and climate change are affecting the Islands in many and serious ways. First, sea levels are rising at the rate of about .5 millimeters per year, or about 4 centimeters over a decade, she said. Rising sea levels effect the pearl industry and tourism. Pearls need certain temperatures for peak production. If temperatures rise, the pearl returns aren’t favorable.

Secondly, the Islands are experiencing more severe weather events. Cyclone Pat in early 2010 caused nearly \$12 million (New Zealand) in devastation to the Island of Aitutaki while Tropical Storm 11 (later Cyclone Sarah) destroyed the School in Penrhyn. The frequency and intensity of cyclones is up.

“When we get cyclones, we get substantial damage to infrastructure,” said Mathilda Miriea-Tairea, who was Project Manager for The Cyclone Emergency Assistance Loan, which helped the Cooks recover from five cyclones which struck various islands in early 2005. “Harbors, roads, schools, buildings, and hospitals all required repairs.” One of the five cyclones, Percy, which struck the Island of Pukaka, also served as an example of how powerful waves can salinate taro patches, destroying the crop and threatening food security.



Sr. Margaret Clarke at a newly planted taro patch. Staple crops like taro are seriously affected by severe weather events, such as cyclones, particularly on the outer islands. The salinity from damaging waves ruins the crop.



Waves from Cyclone Meena lash the Courthouse steps in Rarotonga, swamping a fast food establishment in Avarua Harbor. Stronger weather events are one of many effects of global warming and climate change in the Pacific. (Photo from National Environment Services files).

Third, there is a shift in rainfall and weather patterns. According to Cook Islands Meteorological Service, the average temperature is increasing by about a degree, so seasons will be longer, hotter, and drier. Some islands are receiving more rainfall than usual, while others, such as Penrhyn, are experiencing drought. “If you don’t get the seasonal rainfall, or the cycles are out of whack, you could have empty water tanks,” said Carruthers. Storm surge damage also will increase. Planters are noticing changes in growing seasons and are researching ways to make plants more adaptable to heat, drought, and higher rainfall. Food security is a definite issue.

Fourthly, reefs suffer extensively from global warming. Reefs protect shorelines from storm surges, serve as homes to marine life, and attract tourists. But rising sea temperatures are affecting the coral. Coral can bleach due to heat stress which damages the algae which supply them with food. Carruthers mentions another, relatively new, phenomenon which requires more study. “Five years ago, we didn’t think that as more carbon dioxide enters the air, the ocean takes it up through phytoplankton and stores it, causing acidification,” she said. “That makes the ocean less alkaline, which puts more pressure on coral reefs. It dissolves them. The coral reefs can’t withstand it.”

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Educating Parish Teams, Law Enforcement and Judicial Staffs about Violence Against Women

By Sr. Mary Louise Stubbs, Executive Director, Catholic Charities of Arkansas



The STOP (Services/Training/Officers/Prosecutors) Program is federally funded through state administered grants to provide education on the dynamics of criminal violence and the civil / legal rights which are available to address them. Criminal violence crimes include sexual assault, stalking, domestic violence, dating violence, hate crimes, and human trafficking. Catholic Charities of Arkansas has provided services to victims of these crimes through the VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) funding available through the U.S. Department of Justice for several years, and has identified a need for education that would help people recognize victims and help them obtain appropriate civil and legal services.

Through the original VAWA program, priests of the diocese and workers in domestic violence shelters have been educated regarding the rights of victims of violence, with an emphasis on victims who are foreign nationals. The STOP grant also allows us to educate communities, parish teams, police departments, and judicial system staff on both recognizing victims and being aware of their civil rights.

We work closely with the FBI on trafficking situations, and the education sessions promote development of local systems of awareness and intervention for women and children who are sex-slaves or victims of other violent crimes. A recent example involved a woman named Blanca and her three children. Blanca left her small children in care of relatives to take a temporary job that her cousin assured her had good pay in Arkansas. However, on arrival, she was locked up, gang-raped, brutalized, drugged, and put on the streets as a prostitute. She escaped and our program helped get the evidence to put the perpetrator in prison and to assist Blanca to get a T-Visa which allowed her to work here and get her life back together. Last summer the perpetrator was released from prison, deported, and was looking for the children so they could be hurt in revenge. We asked Fr. Gay if the Vincentians in Blanca's home country could assist with safely transporting the children to the U.S. as soon as the legal paperwork could be completed. This resulted in the quiet involvement of many people, including the bishop of that country and their local Catholic Charities system, to keep the children safe and get them back to their mother. They are doing well at this time.



The Cook Islands continued

Following the workshop, Island leaders are gathering more data, brainstorming about adaptation and suggesting many solutions, such as planting more coconut trees, improving cyclone shelters, researching weather-resistant crop trees to prevent soil erosion, better preparation for disaster reliefs, and greater reef protection.

The Pacific Conference of Churches issued a position paper in April, 2009, particularly related to climate change refugees. "To continue to walk the current path of ecological destruction is not only recklessness; it's a sin," the paper states. What would Islanders say to larger nations who are great carbon emitters? "They need to care about the little guys," says Ms. Marsh, "Take a little more time to consider us. We're humans, too! We also have communities, and we are profoundly affected by climate change!"



L-R: Steve Barrett, Acting Island Secretary; Basilio Kao-kao, Environment Officer; and George Samuela, Mayor, represent the Island of Ma'uke at the recent Climate Change Workshop in Rarotonga.

Myths and Realities: Birthright Citizenship

By Sr. Mary Ann Azar

In the United States, citizenship is conferred by birth—meaning that any child born within the territory of the U.S. is a citizen. This was added to the Constitution after the Civil War to reverse the Dred Scott Decision (1857) in which the Supreme Court held that persons of African descent who were born in the U.S. were not, in fact, U.S. citizens.

Recently some states and Federal lawmakers have made proposals to change the current reality of “birthright citizenship.” They hope to decrease or stop unlawful immigration to the United States by denying citizenship to children born here to parents without legal status. What are myths about this approach to illegal immigration, and what is the reality?

MYTH:

Unauthorized immigrant women are attracted to the United States by the promise of citizen children, and so they can automatically obtain legal status for themselves.

FACT—Most immigrants come to the United States to work, not to have U.S.-born children. (see e.g., Gordon Hanson, *The Economics and Policy of Illegal Immigration in the United States*, Migration Policy Institute (December 2009).

MYTH:

These “anchor babies” can easily help their parents obtain legal status.

FACT—A U.S. citizen cannot apply for a visa for an immediate family member until the child turns 21—a long wait for his or her parents to “become legal.” Then after applying, there is often a wait until a visa becomes available, which only adds to the time spent waiting.

MYTH:

Repealing birthright citizenship would decrease the number of unauthorized immigrants.

FACT—Actually, if birthright citizenship were repealed, the number of unauthorized immigrants would increase, since the children born to unauthorized parents would also be unauthorized. This would also put a burden on “legally born citizens” to prove their family heritage and blood relationships .

The US Catholic Bishops oppose the repeal of birthright citizenship, believing that it would create “a permanent underclass in U.S. society, contravening democratic tradition; undermining the human dignity of innocent children who would be punished though they did nothing wrong and ultimately weakening the family.”/ (USCCB Issue Briefing Series, Issue #2, 2011)

Education about Human Trafficking in Jacksonville, FL

By Mary Alice Phelan, St. Vincent’s HealthCare

“Human Trafficking happens in Southeast Asia, not here in the US”. No, surprisingly to many people, Human Trafficking is occurring in Jacksonville, in Florida and throughout the US. Local examples abound. One striking case involved women from another country whose English was rudimentary, and who were required to work in a mall kiosk never out of sight of their captor. One of the women eventually was able to make contact with a customer, simply asking her for help. The customer followed through on the request, notifying law enforcement agencies that freed the women from the captors and worked with the women to get them into the services for Human Trafficking Victims. Stories like this are daily occurrences throughout the country.

The issue is of such concern that the US Conference of Catholic Bishops has declared “Human Trafficking is a horrific crime against the basic dignity and rights of the human person.” This led the bishops to form a pilot program to increase public awareness among Catholics in the two most impacted states, California and Florida. Catholic hospitals, schools and parishes in Florida are working to inform staff and the community about the issues facing persons who are victims of Human Trafficking.

At St. Vincent’s HealthCare in Jacksonville, presentations have been made on the subject to a variety of audiences.

1. The core presentation is a power point with basic information on the enormity of the issue, signs of persons who may be trafficked, suggestions on talking to the suspected victim and how to help, including information on the national hotline. (1-888-373-7888)
2. The presentation to St. Vincent’s HealthCare’s Board of Directors was in the form of a video reflection. It surprised members of the board that Human Trafficking was happening in the neighborhood of St. Vincent’s. A recent media report highlighted the situation where wait staff at a nearby restaurant was held in bondage, forced to work multiple hours daily, given no compensation and provided housing in a cramped small apartment.
3. The presentations to frontline care-givers at the two hospitals in the system are more focused on how frontline nursing staff can identify and work with suspected victims.



In 2005, the Daughters of Charity, East Central Province, based in Evansville, Indiana, elected to join a growing worldwide movement known as Community Supported Agriculture or "CSA." While perhaps just an idea five years ago, "Seton Harvest" has evolved to become a model of environmental stewardship and a nutritional food source for over 150 families within the Evansville area. The CSA movement came to the United States from Europe in 1984 and has since grown to over 1,200 farms. A CSA farm grows vegetables and herbs using biodynamic or chemically-free growing methods. All of the produce is distributed among a committed group of shareholders who share with the farmer the risks and benefits of farming. Throughout the growing season, the crops are divided among the shareholders typically within 24 to 48 hours of harvest. Community Supported Agriculture provides not only healthy food for local families, but it also preserves open spaces that are being rapidly consumed by development and protects the earth from the environmental impact associated with the burning of fossil fuels. To understand the benefits of Community Supported Agriculture, one needs to understand a number of "food facts" associated with our ever-expanding global economy.



As Americans, we have many choices to make when it comes to where we purchase our food and the types of food we elect to consume. Unless we are engaged in agriculture or large scale gardening, many of us are not connected with the food we eat and therefore, are not knowledgeable about this most essential part of life itself.

Simply put, many Americans don't know where their food is grown, who grows it and how it is grown.

In an expanding world market, it is not uncommon for vegetables to be shipped from every corner of the globe.

When we rely on the traditional method of buying produce in the supermarket, we are buying food that has traveled from **1,500 to 2,500** miles to reach our dinner plate.

A Positive Response to Climate Change

By Marvin J. Kemper

Administrator of Operations and Properties

Evansville, IN

Needless to say, conventional agriculture contributes to global warming because of the fuel it requires to transport the food such a long distance.



While the U.S. Department of Agriculture regulates farming practices in this country, it does not control the use of pesticides, herbicides and synthetic fertilizers used in commercial farming in other countries. These practices lessen the nutritional value and flavor of the food when we finally do eat it. Furthermore, there are a number of health hazards associated with the preservatives, artificial coloring and other chemical additives.

In recent years, the concept of a "local" economy has gained a growing voice. Food grown locally and consumed locally does not require the burning of fossil fuels and therefore does not contribute to the emission of carbon dioxide (CO₂). Furthermore, by growing vegetables using natural practices, the earth is protected from the harmful effects of conventional farming. By utilizing composting principles, local farmers are effectively able to store carbon (a green house gas) in the soil rather than release it into the atmosphere, thus reducing climate change. Other practices such as crop rotation allow for the optimum use of natural constituents such as nitrogen and organic matter.

Seton Harvest was launched in the spring of 2006, as a barn and two greenhouses were constructed and ten acres of land were committed to the initiative. A farmer trained in sustainable agriculture was hired to manage the day-to-day operations and sixty-five families signed on as shareholders. As an additional commitment to the program, the Sisters elected to subsidize a number of shares for distribution to local shelters, pantries and other agencies. The harvest in that first season totaled 13,670 pounds with 2,740 pounds or 20% of the yield being distributed to charity. With five seasons completed, Seton Harvest is now a mature CSA farm with a steady base of some 150 families and an annual production averaging 40,000 pounds of fresh vegetables and herbs. Thanks to the hard work and commitment of Joe Schalasky ("Farmer Joe") and his assistants, as well as the support of a strong shareholder base, Seton Harvest is poised to make a positive impact on climate change for many years to come.

