

Las Vegas TRIBUNE

Health Access America Seeks to Link Nevada's Uninsured with Coverage

Non-profit organization seeks local business partners to assist in educating Nevada's uninsured regarding options available to them and the need for insurance

Tribune Media Group

The rising number of uninsured Americans represents the most important health care issue facing our nation today.

A high number of Americans without health insurance affects national productivity, the health of our society, our health care infrastructure, and the cost of health care to everyone.

Action on this issue is essential both on the public policy front as well as helping people better understand and access existing health coverage options.

Although the number of uninsured Americans is rising, there is no persistent, yearlong national effort to press for action in Washington, or to link individuals and families with existing private and public coverage options.

Health Access America (HAA), a national campaign supported by the Healthcare Leadership Council (HLC), is making a concerted effort locally to link Las Vegas' uninsured with insurance coverage.

In 2001, HLC initiated its first HAA campaign that had a major impact in changing public understanding regarding the face of the uninsured. HLC-commissioned research discovered that eight of every 10 uninsured Americans live in a wage-earning household.

This year, HAA is being re-engaged forming a broader coalition of groups with resources available to both impact public policy and provide much-needed information to the millions of uninsured Americans.

Locally, HAA will advocate bipartisan public policy measures that will increase the accessibility of private health coverage and improve the efficacy of existing public programs. Two key points will remain a constant thread of the HAA campaign: 1) the problem of the uninsured affects all Americans and must be addressed;

2) private and public coverage options are available for a significant number of Las Vegas' uninsured and a proactive effort is essential to ensure that as many eligible people as possible are linked with the available plans and programs. A proactive effort is essential to ensure that as many people as possible are linked with plans and programs.

A non-partisan, non-profit organization, the HAA is seeking to partner with local organizations and businesses to create community awareness regarding the rising number of uninsured individuals that affects everyone locally and maximize insurance enrollment for those who are eligible and are simply uninsured and unaware that they had options.

Health Access America will work with local partners to increase public knowledge regarding the value of insurance and opportunities for coverage through various methods including grass roots community outreach, advocacy, education, research, and polling.

"We are very excited to bring this program to Las Vegas," said John Bayalis, Health Access America national field organizer. "This is a great opportunity for HLC to continue its effort to help those without insurance find the right plan and get the coverage they need."

"Locally, we're not looking to expand coverage at this point, but rather educate those who are eligible to be insured and connect them with coverage options," noted Mark Jolley, Health Access America's Las Vegas field organizer. "So many of our nation's uninsured are simply unaware that there are government and private coverage plans available to them, or they do not have an understanding regarding the need for insurance. Many hard-working uninsured individuals are caught up in the day-to-day routine of providing for their family that, though insurance should be a top priority, they do not have the time or means to research their eligibility. It is our goal to assist these local individuals, with an emphasis on small businesses, young adults, children, and Latinos, through field outreach and education."

For more information regarding partnering with Health Access America and strengthening the quest to reduce the number of uninsured Nevadans, please contact Health Access America's Las Vegas office at 702.454.2900.
