

Apple Health for Kids Toll-Free Hotline Statistics

Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5092; Section 211(23); Chapter 334; Laws of 2021

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Apple Health for Kids Toll-Free Line Statistics

Acknowledgements

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Executive summary

The Legislature, through Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 5092 (2021), required the Health Care Authority (HCA) to submit a report to the appropriate committees of the legislature that provides information about the operation of a toll-free hotline, by a nonprofit organization, to assist families who wish to learn about and enroll in the Washington Apple Health (Medicaid) for Kids and Apple Health for Kids with premiums program (also referred to as the Children’s Health Insurance Program [CHIP]). The report should contain, at a minimum:

- Information about the number of calls in the previous year;
- The amount of time spent on each call;
- Comparisons to previous years, where available; and
- Information about what data is collected related to this service.

Background

As detailed in Section 5.1.2 of the Washington State Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) State Plan, Washington State participates in the national Healthy Kids Now! (HKN!) toll-free 800 number. This number provides information on Apple Health for Kids and CHIP eligibility for clients who may qualify for services. Washington also funds a toll-free 800 number through WithinReach, providing information, application assistance, and referral services. Washington’s Apple Health and CHIP eligibility is determined within the structure of the Washington State Health Benefit Exchange, our state-based exchange (wahealthplanfinder.org). We continue to work closely with community partner agencies, medical providers, schools, and civic organizations to publicize and promote the Apple Health for Kids program.

In July 2011, HCA initiated a contract with WithinReach to provide the services and staff to:

- Operate a direct toll-free phone line dedicated to information, education, and application assistance as identified in 42 CFR 457.90 and related awareness and education activities as allowed under Title 42 of the CFR;
- Coordinate outreach activities with Department of Health’s (DOH) Child Profile program to provide information about Apple Health coverage through Child Profile;
- Conduct up to 100 outreach calls monthly to families whose coverage did not auto-renew and who need to take action to remain insured;
- Conduct up to 200 outreach calls monthly to families who appear to be Apple Health eligible but need to update their application;
- Collect and report the following data to the contract manager, when available:
 - Report prepared by
 - Reporting timeframe
 - HKN! Hotline calls answered
 - HKN! Hotline calls abandoned
 - Average speed answered
 - Average time spent on call
 - HKN! Hotline outgoing calls

- Average time spent on outgoing calls
- Client/app ID
- Primary applicant/caller
- Zip code
- County
- Call type
- App status
- New or Renewal application
- Primary language
- Race
- Ethnicity

Findings

As evidenced by the data, total call volume the contractor handles on behalf of HCA increased by 36 percent between 2019 and 2020 and by another 5 percent in 2021. The slow rate of increase from 2020 to 2021 is likely attributable to the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE). During the PHE, HCA continues coverage for children on Apple Health without the family needing to take action. This reduces the need to contact a customer service number for assistance. It is anticipated that this call volume will dramatically increase in the 12 months following the PHE ending as HCA works through design and implementation of other child and family-centric programs (as HCA gradually resumes redetermination processes).

2019-2021 call summary

Year	Call Count			Time Spent on Calls (avg)		
	Incoming	Outgoing	Total Calls	Incoming	Outgoing	All Calls
2019	741	226	967	12:12	2:10	9:52
2020	665	844	1509	8:39	2:48	5:25
2021	490	1096	1586	7:28	2:38	4:08

Conclusion

Washington Apple Health for Kids and CHIP are critical programs for low-income Washington children and are essential to reducing the number of uninsured and advancing health equity. WithinReach has proven its ability to maximize impact through various outreach mechanisms and for multiple different yet cross-agency collaborative workstreams. Studies have shown that “experiences with outreach and enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP indicate that families value the programs but can face numerous barriers to enrollment.”¹ Outreach and assistance provided by trusted community partners remain key to aiding eligible individuals with enrollment and maintenance of their health benefits in a holistic approach that addresses the needs of the entire family unit. It is essential that HCA continue to allocate resources toward outreach and enrollment and will become even more critical as we approach the end of the PHE and the implementation of any future initiatives.

¹ <https://files.kff.org/attachment/key-lessons-from-medicaid-and-chip-for-outreach-and-enrollment-under-the-affordable-care-act-issue-brief>