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### **SC Medicaid Tweets its Message**

South Carolina's Medicaid managed care program, Healthy Connections Choices, has entered the world of social media to better connect with members and potential members.

South Carolina is one of three projects that MAXIMUS, the Medicaid managed care enrollment counselor for South Carolina, has approached and identified to see how Facebook, Twitter and a blog could reach the Medicaid population. The Social Media Demonstration is led by MAXIMUS Health Services and their Center for Health Literacy, in collaboration with project staff and state clients.

"As part of this demonstration, we created a Facebook page, a Twitter account, and a blog for the project that includes pre-approved outreach and education content," said Jan Ruff, senior vice president of business development for MAXIMUS Health Services Eastern Division. "We are able to gauge the response with a variety of qualitative and quantitative measures to understand its usefulness to the project, client and consumer groups."

Research released in the last year by the Pew Internet & American Life Project shows significant growth in the use of social media technologies, especially within the 18-35 age group. Social media are online or web based technologies that facilitate written exchanges and interactions between users or between a user and a larger audience. Examples include: blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Organizations and business are finding value in these technologies because they provide new ways to reach out to customers and stakeholders, pushing information to the users based on their profiles and interests and "finding them where they are." They also allow for users to provide valuable feedback to the organization, creating opportunities for two-way communication with users.

"We have an interesting opportunity to use these new tools to keep Medicaid members, potential members, and other interested parties current on health care changes, how to enroll in health care and other updates," said Jeff Stensland, Director of Communications, SC Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS). "As the Medicaid agency for the state, we have a responsibility to members to be sure no private information is made public and to respect the privacy of our members," he added. "To accomplish that, our social media methods are information driven rather than interactive."

However, even with minimal interactivity this form of outreach gives us an opportunity to "listen" to our members in new ways. They see that we are establishing our presence on the social media sites that they frequent, and that they can get information, offer feedback, and even ask questions using this technology.

The demonstration project will last at least six months and will be evaluated for its effectiveness.

“As our audience demographics change so then must our communication methods,” said Stensland. “It’s exciting to participate in this demonstration and to see how our members respond.”

Healthy Connections Choices is part of the state’s overall Medicaid reform plan and is designed to get a better return on South Carolina’s health care investment. Through partnerships with managed care organizations, medical homes networks and special enrollment counselors, the SCDHHS seeks to increase care coordination and disease prevention methods not found in traditional Fee-for-Service Medicaid. Those who choose to enroll in a health plan will also establish crucial relationships with a primary care doctor.

For more information on SC Healthy Connections Choices call free 1-877-552-4642 or visit the website at [www.SCchoices.com](http://www.SCchoices.com).