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**Health - Family Conference  
Event**

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Family Conference  
event

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

June 18, 1998

**FAMILY RE-UNION 7: FAMILIES AND HEALTH**

**DATE:** June 22, 1998  
**LOCATION:** Vanderbilt University  
Nashville, TN  
**EVENT TIME:** 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm  
**FROM:** Bruce Reed/Chris Jennings

**I. PURPOSE**

To illustrate the important role of the family in the delivery of quality health care; to demonstrate your commitment to address the health care needs of American families; and to announce a series of new initiatives to improve health for older Americans, children, and all families. You also can use this forum as an opportunity to address the tobacco issue.

**II. BACKGROUND**

This year's Family Re-Union focuses on families and health. The purpose of the conference is to bring together families, health care providers, representatives of health plans, family-centered community-based organizations, and other experts to highlight the critical health issues that families face and the ways in which the health care system -- at the community, state, and Federal level -- can be more responsive to their needs.

This is the seventh family conference hosted by the Vice President and Mrs. Gore. You have participated in every one since 1993. Previous topics have included fatherhood, family and the media, and families and education. This year's conference will be held in the same location as last year's and will follow a similar format.

During the course of this event you will: (1) issue an Executive Memorandum that directs eight Federal agencies to implement over 150 new initiatives to help enroll millions of uninsured children in health insurance programs; and (2) renew your call on Congress to pass a patients' bill of rights. In addition, the Vice President and the First Lady will announce a new multi-faceted national health initiative for older Americans, which includes: the implementation of new preventive benefits for Medicare beneficiaries; a new public service announcement on osteoporosis; more usable information on critical health care choices; and a new nationwide public/private Medicare council, designed to help older Americans and their families navigate the increasingly complex health care system.

## **EXECUTIVE MEMORANDUM TO IMPLEMENT OVER 150 NEW FEDERAL COMMITMENTS TO ENROLL ELIGIBLE BUT UNINSURED CHILDREN.**

Over 4 million uninsured children are eligible for but not enrolled in Medicaid, and as the new Children's Health Insurance Program is implemented, even more families will have children who are eligible for state or federal health insurance programs. You will sign an Executive Memorandum that cuts across jurisdiction and traditional agency inflexibility by directing eight Federal agencies -- ranging from HUD to SSA to the Education Department -- to implement over 150 new Federal initiatives to help sign up the millions of uninsured children eligible for but not enrolled in health insurance programs. This action illustrates how a responsive and flexible government can meet the evolving needs of families and is being characterized by the American Association of Pediatrics characterized these initiatives as "representing the best of creative government and absolutely critical to achieving our common goal of providing health insurance for all eligible children." The initiatives include:

- **Sending letters to 350,000 federal workers, including Head Start teachers, school nurses, child support workers, and community health center directors** asking them to ensure that all of the families they work with whose children are eligible for Medicaid or CHIP are enrolled in these programs.
- **Working With National Organizations and Programs That Reach Millions of Families to Help Enroll Children in Health Insurance Programs**, including educating grandparents through the Medicare program, holding a conference with Historically Black Colleges to identify new strategies, and ensuring that sites, including 15,000 public housing projects, 400 IRS walk-in centers, and 113 job centers, have information for families about how to enroll children in health insurance.
- **Releasing a New Guide to Help Child Care Workers Enroll Uninsured Children.** Child care centers are one family-friendly setting where parents can learn about insurance programs they may be eligible for. There are already many efforts underway to link child care centers with the health needs of the millions of children in child care. Today, the Department of Health and Human Services is releasing a new child care handbook "Child Care and Medicaid: Partners for Healthy Children" to ensure that child care workers understand how to identify and enroll families with uninsured children.

## **NEW NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO IMPROVE HEALTH OF OLDER**

**AMERICANS.** One of the greatest concerns for families is the health of older family members. Today, the Vice President will announce:

- **New Preventive Benefits for Medicare Beneficiaries starting July 1st.** For the first time, Medicare will cover two critical preventive benefits -- bone mass measurement tests to detect osteoporosis and diabetes education. The benefits were enacted as part of the historic Balanced Budget Act of 1997 -- as well as a series of preventive benefits to detect cancer, which were implemented earlier this year. These benefits underscore how Medicare is trying to encourage better health outcomes for families.

- **A New Nationwide Public Service Announcement on Osteoporosis Featuring the First Lady and Mrs. Gore.** One in two women over the age of 50 will have an osteoporosis-related fracture. Many of these women are not aware they are at risk until they suffer a fracture or broken bone. At this event, the First Lady will unveil a new public service announcement featuring the First Lady and Mrs. Gore to inform women about the new osteoporosis Medicare benefit and to ensure that all women, particularly older women, get bone mass measurement tests to detect osteoporosis.
- **Launched a New Internet Site for Medicare Beneficiaries.** Families need good information to help make the best health care decisions for older family members. The Vice President will launch a new nationwide Internet site ([Medicare.gov](http://Medicare.gov)) so that families can understand the options and services Medicare provides. This information will be even more critical as the historic changes you enacted as part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 are implemented this fall. These reforms give beneficiaries new plan choices that will improve care for older Americans, but also have the potential to cause confusion.
- **Created a Nationwide Public/Private Medicare Education Council, including over 80 National Organizations, to ensure families receive good care.** The Vice President will also announce that over 80 organizations, including the AFL-CIO, American Association of Retired Persons, Older Women's League, National Rural Health Association, and American Association of Family Physicians, are joining with the Health Care Financing Administration, Administration on Aging, and National Institutes of Health to launch a new National Medicare Education Program that will work to ensure that families have the information they need to make critical health decisions including: ensuring that Medicare beneficiaries learn of the new preventive benefits and other prevention and wellness strategies; understand new plan options so they can select the health plan that best meets their needs; and know the consumer protections available under Medicare.

## **PROTECTING FAMILIES THROUGH A FEDERAL PATIENT'S BILL OF RIGHTS**

- **Renewing Call on Congress to Pass a Patients' Bill of Rights.** This is also an opportunity to again urge Congress to stop delaying and pass a patients' bill of rights to ensure that all families have the patient protections they need in a rapidly changing health care system. A patients' bill of rights should contain a range of protections, including guaranteed access to needed health care specialists, access to emergency room services when and where the need arises, and access to a meaningful internal and external appeals process for consumers to resolve their differences with their health plans and health care providers.

### III. PARTICIPANTS

#### **Briefing Participants:**

The President  
The First Lady  
Chris Jennings

#### **Event Participants:**

The Vice President  
The First Lady  
Mrs. Gore  
Julie Moretz, Chair of the Family Advisory Council to the Medical College of Georgia's Children's Medical Center.  
Dr. Ricki Robinson, Co-Director of the Descanso Medical Center for Development and Learning in La Canada, CA.  
Tony Watson, CEO of the New York Health Insurance Plan, and one of your appointees to the Medicare Commission.  
Sheila Savannah, Executive Director of People in Partnership in Houston, TX  
Dr. Irwin Redlener, President and Co-Founder of the Children's Health Fund, New York, NY  
Milagros Batista, Program Manager for Best Beginnings, New York, NY  
Gerri Lamb, Nurse and Senior Corporate Director for Community Programs at Carondelet Health Network, Tucson, AZ  
Jim Tallon, President of the United Hospital Fund, New York, NY

### IV. PRESS PLAN

Open Press.

### V. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

- The Vice President will brief **YOU** on the events that have taken place earlier in the day.
- **YOU** will greet participants in the panel discussion.
- The Vice President returns to the stage and he and Mrs. Gore will introduce a video. [The film "Team Game" is a short documentary highlighting how health care is portrayed by the media.]
- **YOU** will then be announced onto the stage accompanied by the Vice President, the First Lady, and Mrs. Gore.
- The Vice President makes brief remarks and introduces Mrs. Gore.
- Mrs. Gore makes remarks and introduces the First Lady.
- The First Lady makes remarks and introduces a Public Service Announcement on Osteoporosis featuring the First Lady and Mrs. Gore.
- The Public Service Announcement is played.
- The Vice President returns to the Podium and introduces **YOU**.
- **YOU** will make remarks.
- Upon conclusion of your remarks, **YOU**, the Vice President, the First Lady, and Mrs. Gore will proceed to your seats for the discussion. [Other panelists will already be

seated.]

- The Vice President will open the discussion by introducing participants.
- The Vice President will introduce each participant and YOU will have the opportunity to ask follow up questions. [Suggested sequence and questions attached.]
- Upon conclusion of the discussion, Mrs. Gore will invite you to proceed to the signing table where you will sign the Executive Memorandum.
- Following your signing of the Executive Memorandum, you will depart.

## **VI. REMARKS**

Opening remarks provided by Speechwriting.

## **FAMILY CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS AND SUGGESTED QUESTIONS**

(IN SPEAKING ORDER – THE VICE PRESIDENT WILL INTRODUCE PARTICIPANTS AND PARTICIPANTS WILL SPEAK. THE PRESIDENT, FIRST LADY, AND MRS. GORE HAVE THE OPTION TO ASK FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS.)

**Julie Moretz** is the Chair of the Family Advisory Council to the Medical College of Georgia's Children's Medical Center. Julie's seven year-old son was born with complex heart disease and has undergone 10 heart surgeries. She has learned first-hand how the health care system should be more responsive to families and she has worked tirelessly to make the hospital where her son was treated more family-centered so that it truly accommodates parents and families (e.g., she redesigned rooms to accommodate family-member visits, and created a guide for parents).

**POTUS SUGGESTED QUESTION:** You have invested a lot of energy and time into improving your son's care ... In fact, I think that Daniel is here with us today -- Acknowledge Daniel ... What advice do you have for other families in similar situations?

**MEG SUGGESTED QUESTION:** You clearly made an impact on Medical College of Georgia's hospital. What changes do you think were the most important to families and do they have broader applications for all hospitals?

**Tony Watson** is the CEO of the New York Health Insurance Plan, a progressive managed care plan. He believes that there are many things health plans can do to be more family-centered, including supporting basic consumer protections. Tony's plan has developed, in conjunction with the New York Department of Health, an important domestic violence program that offers services regardless whether the client is a member of New York HIP. [Tony is also one of the President's appointees to the Medicare Commission.]

**VP SUGGESTED QUESTION:** Your health plan supports a Patient's Bill of Rights. Can you tell us why you think this will be good for health plans as well as families?

**HRC SUGGESTED QUESTION:** I have met many women and children who are plagued by the terror of family violence. I have learned that approximately 20 percent of all emergency room visits by women result from domestic violence. What are the costs of domestic violence, beyond the clear emotional costs, to patients and our health care system?

**Dr. Irwin Redlener** is the President and co-founder of The Children's Health Fund. Irwin works as a pediatrician and child advocate for homeless, abused, and neglected children across the country. He is an expert on the importance of insurance and other prevention efforts for children outside the health care system.

**HRC SUGGESTED QUESTION:** We are proud of what the Federal agencies are doing to reach out to families of uninsured children. What would you recommend as the best next steps?

**MEG SUGGESTED QUESTION:** What are the best ways for local communities to get involved in these efforts?

**Milagros Batista** is the Program Manager for Best Beginnings, an organization which is devoted to promoting healthy families and children through extensive community outreach and the first

home visiting program in New York State. Her program identifies high-risk mothers and works to address any immediate needs. Milagros has pioneered new methods to work with families in the home and to make sure they have appropriate health coverage.

**POTUS SUGGESTED QUESTION:** What are the unique barriers that minority populations face in terms of understanding health insurance and other health care programs?

**HRC QUESTION:** How best can we address these issues?

**Jim Tallon** is the President of the United Hospital Fund, a philanthropic and health services research organization that is currently running a project on family care givers. He recently became Executive Director for the planning committee unveiled last week to create a national Quality Forum.

**POTUS SUGGESTED QUESTION:** One of the weaknesses in the current health care system is that it does not do enough for those with long-term care needs. Many people believe that long-term care is far too expensive, but your experience indicates that if you manage the services carefully, they can be affordable. How do you reconcile the perception and the reality?

**VPOTUS SUGGESTED QUESTION:** In preparation for this conference, we heard over and over again that patients and their families to make the best choices about their health care. One of the greatest challenges is to ensure that this information is in a form that families can understand and use. How can we best meet this challenge?

**Sheila Savannah** is the Executive Director of People in Partnership in Houston, TX, which has had remarkable success in assisting families with mental health problems and providing services to promote the well-being of children.

**POTUS SUGGESTED QUESTION:** As you know, Mrs. Gore is our Administration's leading voice on mental issues. She worked to ensure that the new Children's Health Insurance Program has a strong mental health benefit and to pass the mental health parity act. What are the greatest challenges the families you work with face in addressing mental health issues?

**MEG SUGGESTED QUESTION:** You work with families, teachers, and other people in the community to identify children's mental health issues as early as possible. What are the benefits for the patient and the entire community when you identify behavioral problems early?

**Dr. Ricki Robinson** is the Co-Director of the Descanso Medical Center for Development and Learning in La Canada, CA. Ricki is the mother of an autistic child, and since 1990 has been involved in developing family-centered education programs for autistic children. As a physician, her personal experience has given her a unique perspective on how health professionals can work with families confronted by illnesses.

**VP SUGGESTED QUESTION:** What changes in medical education need to be made to better address the needs of families that have experiences like yours?

**HRC SUGGESTED QUESTION:** You have experienced many changes in the health care delivery system. What changes are necessary to empower families to navigate

**the health care system.**

**Gerri Lamb** is a Nurse and Senior Corporate Director for Community Programs at Carondelet Health Network, Tucson, AZ. Gerri directs numerous programs that bring wellness, self-care, and case management services to the elderly of southern Arizona, making her an expert on one of the greatest challenges families face: assuring good care for older family members.

**POTUS SUGGESTED QUESTION: What would you advise this new council the Vice President announced today, as it considers ways to inform Medicare beneficiaries about new benefits, choices, and responsibilities?**

**MEG SUGGESTED QUESTION: What are some of the other obstacles to assuring that seniors and their families are aware of how to gain access to the care they need?**