

Rick and Wendy Joy, Sonoma County

It's a demanding task for many families to find out about health insurance programs, determine which one they qualify for, and then complete the complex application process. That's why Healthy Kids Sonoma County exists: to help connect children with the type of coverage that is right for their family. Each family is unique, and Healthy Kids Sonoma County always does its best to smooth out any potential bumps in the road to children's healthcare coverage.

Sandra, the Outreach & Enrollment Coordinator for Healthy Kids Sonoma County, received an e-mail from a Special Project Section Manager for the Healthy Families Program in late February 2009. The e-mail informed Sandra about a Sonoma County family that needed some assistance in applying to the Healthy Families Program, and that the family would need specialized translation services because both parents had visual and hearing impairments. The family needed health coverage for their 5-year-old daughter and they were having a hard time negotiating the application and fulfilling the documentation requirements.

The family had applied for Healthy Families the previous December but had a great deal of difficulty in communicating with the program about the income documents that would be acceptable to establish eligibility. They had several types of income and were unsure about which documents to submit. The confusion about their income led Healthy Families to forward the application to the Medi-Cal program. Medi-Cal determined that they did not qualify.

And so they were once again without insurance for their young daughter.

As it turns out, Sandra was able to communicate with Rick, the father of the little girl, by e-mail because, although he does have a hearing impairment (and unlike his wife, Wendy), he is sighted. After Sandra realized that she and Rick could communicate easily in this manner, the two worked together via computer to get the application done as quickly as possible. Sandra was able to simplify the income documentation by using a yearly tax form, which she knew was a document that Healthy Families would accept and understand. Sandra also took the time to answer Rick's and Wendy's questions about the Healthy Families Program – a conversation that lasted over the course of several days.

When all of the necessary documents were collected and the application was completed, Sandra contacted the Healthy Families Program Section Manager and asked his assistance in expediting the process. He agreed.

Now Rick and Wendy's 5-year-old daughter has comprehensive health, dental and vision coverage through Healthy Families, and she is able to continue seeing the same healthcare providers she has had all along.

Healthy Families and Medi-Cal are great programs but many more families can benefit from them when there is local assistance to help them apply, successfully enroll, and utilize the health benefits. Healthy Kids Sonoma County can be reached at 1-800-427-8982.

