

## My experience with IA Healthlink

My husband and I work with a refugee family. I want to explain to them the healthcare options available through IA Health Link. The manual is very well laid out and on first appearance is very complete –they just can't read it.

The letter of introduction states that a default plan has been picked for each member. The task is to review the enclosed information to decide if the plan is the right one and make necessary changes by December 17<sup>th</sup>. I look at the enclosed information and it is a one page piece of marketing material for each plan, each proclaiming they are a great plan and giving no specifics - just a toll free number and a website. Two of the plans try to entice potential members with a free cell phone. This sounds like a federal program that has been available for years. Rather disingenuous.

Toll free numbers are of no use to my family because they are just beginning to understand English. I try calling the DHS. A recording warns of high call volume and long wait times. I have to hang up. The next four times I call I get a busy signal. It occurs to me that since the DHS has only regular business hours, my family will have to miss work to get the help they need.

I look at my family's assigned health care plan and go online (they do not own a computer.) I navigate three websites, all from the same healthcare provider, to find the information I need. First I find the manual for the healthcare providers. It is still in *draft* form. Then I find the list of providers. It appears that there are many more doctors available in eastern Iowa than in the Des Moines area. This is not the right plan for my family. At this point it dawns on me that Medicaid members were probably assigned plans at random, on the assumption that it would be easy for them to find and review four separate plans and make an informed choice.

I go to another provider's list. I am very excited at the list of providers – so many choices. Then I realize that I am looking to the list for *regular* customers. I scroll down. The IAHealth link list is *still under construction*. I am banging my head on my desk. Which plan should I look at next – the one with the free phone or the one with fraud issues?

I know little about managed care and I don't have an opinion on privatization. But I do know when something is being poorly done. Governor Branstad touted the choice that people would have in their health care. Right now that choice is very hard to find.

Why does this change have to be made so willy-nilly? There is nothing special about January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016. Wouldn't it be better for Iowans and for Terry Branstad's legacy to do something well instead of quickly?

Thank you, Ann Harmon