



September 1, 2017

Ms. Seema Verma
CMS Administrator
US DHHS
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Administrator Verma:

I write with regard to continued CMS funding for outreach and enrollment of Wisconsin residents in health insurance coverage via the federal Navigator program.

I oversee [Covering Wisconsin](#), this state's largest federally-designated and state-licensed Navigator agency. Covering Wisconsin is prepared to begin the third and final year of our three-year cooperative agreement with CMS, under which we have been connecting residents with their coverage options, including the ACA Marketplace and Medicaid/BadgerCare.

CMS had us submit our non-competing continuation proposal in June for a September 1 start date. CMS throughout the summer indicated that we should expect funding to continue through the third year of this cooperative agreement. We had been told that we would receive a notice of grant award (NGA) from CMS by early to mid-August, and then later told we would receive an NGA by Friday, September 1.

We have now learn that the NGAs will not be distributing to the Navigator entities until a later date, and that CMS is reconsidering the award amounts.

With this news, at this late date, I (and I imagine other Navigator agencies) now face an immediate and very pressing concern: How to pay/retain the people whom Covering Wisconsin employs or contracts with to serve as Navigators under this cooperative agreement.

Funding for this program staff ended on September 1. Without funding information from CMS, I am unable to assure these trained, experienced, and dedicated professionals that their employment will continue. When a funding award is delayed, Covering Wisconsin is able to bridge a short gap, but we are not able to absorb the losses if we continue to pay staff only to learn later that funding will/does not ultimately materialize as expected.

CMS places us in a situation of having to lay off or potentially lose these trained and experienced staff while we await delayed notice from CMS about continued funding – and, at that point, possibly having lost the staff needed to be ready and prepared for the fast-approaching November 1 start of open enrollment.

1300 Linden Drive
Madison, WI 53706
608.261.1455

455 728 N. James Lovell Street WI 53706
Milwaukee, WI 53203
414.270.4677

■ [coveringwi.org](#) ■ info@coveringwi.org ■ [blog: cwi.wordpress.com](http://blog:cwi.wordpress.com) ■ [facebook: www.facebook.com/cwi](https://www.facebook.com/cwi)

Covering Wisconsin is a non-partisan organization with the mission to connect Wisconsin residents to programs that promote health and well-being and assure that they know how to use those programs effectively. For over a decade we have helped Wisconsin residents gain coverage via Medicaid and BadgerCare and, since 2014, via the ACA. We have been partners with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services as it implemented Governor Walker's Medicaid reforms, assuring that Wisconsin residents understood the changes and what insurance options were and are available to them via BadgerCare, the ACA, or otherwise.

If federal (and, or state) law changes, Covering Wisconsin is committed to working to assure Wisconsin residents understand the programs under the new law and how they might best gain insurance coverage. We exist to assure that our state's residents can effectively navigate health insurance programs, whether under current law or under a repeal and replace scenario. We are now concerned that resources might not be available to support our state's residents through this process.

We know you share our goals of assuring affordable, quality health insurance coverage and keeping our individual health insurance market strong. We are anxious to keep our staff working toward these goals, as planned for the coming year, and thank you for your consideration of how we might address the immediate needs of our agencies to continue operations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donna Friedsam". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "F".

Donna Friedsam, Director