

REFLECTION FROM THE COORDINATING COUNCIL: 5 CORE COMMITMENTS

It's been less than three years since we came together to make the vision of Put People First! PA a concrete reality. So much has happened in such a short time, and we've made an imprint on dozens of communities around Pennsylvania. We've celebrated successes, treated missteps as opportunities to overcome, and

we've kept learning. Grounded in our experiences and our relationships, we've brought together people, ideas and strategies in this vehicle that we're building to transform our state into one that puts people first. In this moment of reflection, we offer five core commitments that are at the heart of our work:

There is enough to meet our needs. People in power encourage us to believe resources are scarce, because they benefit from our believing so. We've been taught that we have to rob Peter to pay Paul, and that there will always be winners and losers. We must

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begin to ask ourselves, whose interest does it serve to believe that there is not enough? Put People First! PA is committed to discussing this question and finding answers.

Our human needs are our human rights – and we have to claim them. Right now, we have no right to clean water, housing, healthcare, or jobs at a living wage (just to name a few). No one will give us these rights; we have to unite to make them a reality.

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Our rights have always come from struggle, whether it is the right to vote, the right to free speech, or the right to form a union. Put People First! PA is committed to building a livable future, where our human needs are recognized as our human rights.

In order to meet our needs, we need a new definition of leadership. We are taught that leaders are always out in front, with all the answers. We have experiences of people in leadership positions using their power in negative ways. At Put People First! PA, we believe that leadership is about practice, not position. Leaders are developed, not born. Our leaders move in and out of various roles as they develop, and they do everything from cooking food, to making calls, to making speeches. They develop their capac-

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ity to turn our vision into reality by effectively bringing people together to improve ourselves and achieve our common goals. We need leaders who are committed, conscious, connected, and clear – who recognize that you can't harvest without planting the seeds and tending the garden. Put People First! PA is committed to supporting the development of many leaders throughout Pennsylvania.

We have to reach out and get together with everyone who is trying to meet their families' needs. Too often we attack each other based on race, religion, immigration status, what language we speak, what gender we are, who we love, or where we live. These categories cannot tell you much about who a person really is. One

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of the most important things that we can do as leaders is to reject the voices that tell us to blame other people who are also forced to survive on terms and conditions not of their own choosing. Put People First! PA is committed to building a beloved community based on our shared humanity.

We have to believe that we deserve to thrive. All of us are dealing with so much just to meet our most basic needs. We spend all or most of our time looking for work or working multiple jobs; taking care of family; handling bills, loans and debt; dealing with health, education, housing, childcare or transportation issues. When we

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meet each other, talk together and begin to see each other for who we really are, we start to recognize the commonalities in our everyday struggles and the goodness in each other. Put People First! PA believes that collective action transforms us.

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**Universality
Equity
Transparency
Accountability
Participation**



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The South Central Organizing Committees are gearing up for this year's events. To begin fortifying our committees and building members' organizing skills, Put People First PA will be having their first Organizing Institute on April 12, 2015. The Organizing Institute is part of our long-term plan to build committee membership with sustainable leadership. At Put People First PA, we believe in developing every member as a leader, and that it is necessary to foster leadership for committees to be sustainable.

In January we hosted an Affordable Care Act (ACA) 101 workshop for the York Committee, where people could ask questions and sign up for the Affordable Care Act. People expressed frustration of premium hikes and high deductibles, which sparked a great discussion of how health-care is still treated as a commodity and not as a human right. This spring, the Committee is laying the groundwork to host a human rights hearing during the summer, to highlight the health care crisis through individual stories. Members are reaching out to churches in different communities with the hope for a diversity of stories at the hear-

ing. Because the system treats individuals as commodities and not as humans, stories are left untold all too often. When we bring individual stories to the Health Care as a Human Right Campaign, we form bonds of solidarity across communities that are often isolated from each other.

The Gettysburg Organizing Committee has been developing and expanding rapidly.

In December they hosted a human rights hearing with seventy people. In March we hosted a community forum to discuss nutrition. We also registered people for CHIP, and conducted a health screening clinic. Recently, the committee has been putting time and energy into building relationships to create a strong and sustainable foundation for organizing together. Our last meeting was a community dinner, and each member brought a dish to share. Building community together makes us a family and reminds us that our small differences do not compare to the struggle we have in common. If we let ourselves be divided, we all lose.

MEDICAID EXPANSION INFO

by *Kate Kozeniewski & Jacob Hope*

On January 1st, newly elected Governor Tom Wolf recently announced an expansion of Pennsylvania's Medical Assistance program, what most of us know as Medicaid or "welfare insurance." Here is what you need to know about Medicaid, who it covers, and how to get it:

What does Medicaid expansion mean?

Medicaid Expansion means that 600,000 poor and working people across the state who are uninsured can now get low-cost, affordable health insurance, called Medicaid. This includes people who have applied

for Medicaid before and were told they weren't eligible.

Medicaid Expansion is a change to "Healthy PA," the plan implemented by former Governor Tom Corbett. Healthy PA expanded coverage to a lot of people who had no coverage before, but it reduced everyone's benefits. Medicaid Expansion will maintain that eligibility expansion while eliminating those cuts.

It's helpful to understand the difference between Medicaid and Medicare. Medicare is a federal health coverage program funded through our federal taxes (if you look on

your next pay stub, it's the part that says Medicare Tax).

Medicare generally provides health coverage for seniors (65+) and people with permanent disabilities. Medicaid is a state health coverage program which, with the newly announced plan, provides health coverage for children, people with medical conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and HIV/AIDS, and people who have low or no incomes.

What does Medicaid Expansion mean for me?

If you or your loved ones already have coverage through Medicaid, you should continue to have that coverage, and in the coming year, you should see a return of your coverage to what it was before Healthy PA. You may have received a letter in the mail about your Medicaid benefits changing, or about being moved out of a "Private Coverage Option" (PCO). These changes are a part of the switch from Healthy PA to Medicaid expansion, and will take place on June 1st and September 1st, 2015. If you do not have coverage, look below to see if you are eligible and how to apply.

Do I qualify?

Medicaid in Pennsylvania is affordable health coverage for:

- Children
- People with medical conditions (such as diabetes, hypertension, and HIV/AIDS)
- Adults with low/no income
- US citizens or Lawful Permanent Residents (who have been in the US for at least 5 years)

Here's what the qualifying income limits look like, though if you have a qualifying medical condition, the limits may be higher:

Size of household	maximum income limit
1 person	\$16,242
2	\$21,983
3	\$27,724
4	\$33,465
5	\$39,205
6	\$44,946
7	\$50,687
8	\$56,428

Are recent immigrants and undocumented people eligible?

Pennsylvania's Medicaid eligibility rules unfortunately also require people to have U.S. citizenship, or their green cards, for at least 5 years. If you are undocumented, have had your green card for less than 5 years, or have another immigration status, you are not eligible for Medicaid. No matter your immigration or insurance status, there are health centers around the state that will still see you. Find a health center near you here: http://www.pachc.com/health_find.html

I think I qualify. How do I apply?

Good news for those who hate waiting in line at the welfare office: no face-to-face appointments are necessary to apply for Medicaid! You can apply online or over the phone and don't need to go in person. You will need to give the office proof of identity and proof of income, but you can submit that online, by mail, by email, or by dropping it off.

You can apply online at www.compass.state.pa.us.

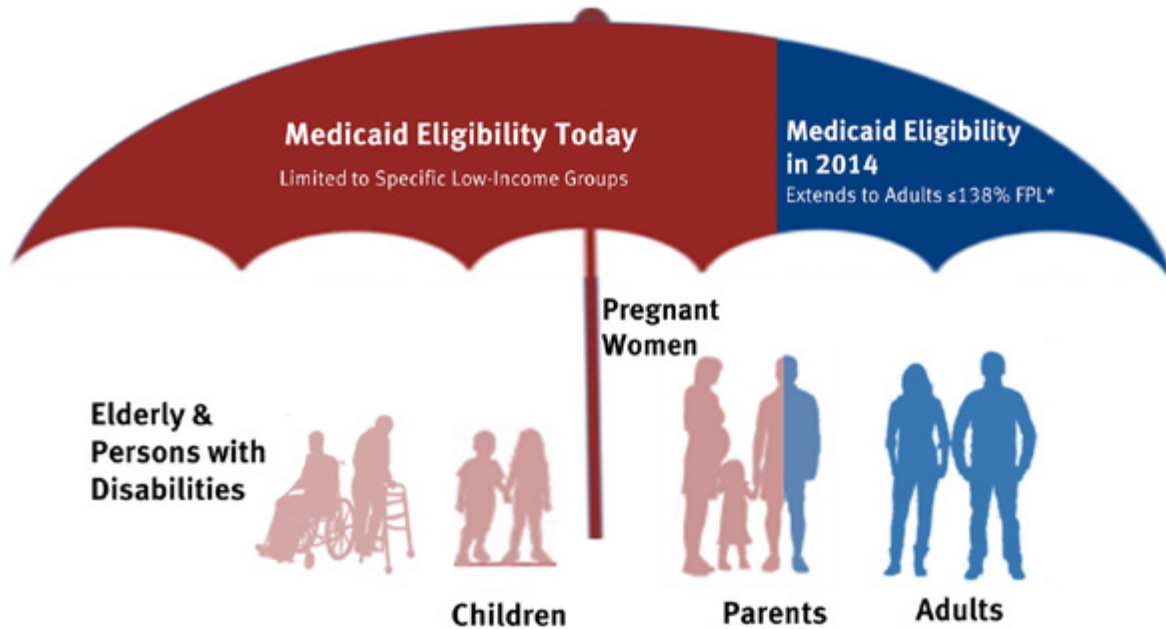
You can apply in person at a local benefits office (welfare office).

How is this different than universal healthcare?

While Medicaid Expansion is something we should all be celebrating, our struggle is far from over. Although Medicaid Expansion means that many more Pennsylvanians will have new or improved health coverage, Medicaid doesn't cover everyone, nor does it cover services like vision, adequate dental care, or abortion services.

It's also important to remember that our health coverage, whether through Medicaid, the Marketplace (Obamacare), or through an employer, is still provided through private insurance companies like Aetna, Independence Blue Cross, and United Healthcare. Insurance companies are not transparent in the decisions they make. We as people do not have a voice in the way they influence and shape our healthcare. Even with increased Medicaid coverage, there will still be networks of doctors we can and cannot see, prescriptions that we must fight insurance companies to cover, co-pays which will be unaffordable, and high deductibles. Undocumented people and new immigrants are also still left out of Pennsylvania's Medicaid, further marginalizing them. We must continue to fight for the full realization of our human right to healthcare through a system that is based on the principles of universality, equity, accountability, transparency and participation. Pennsylvanians need a healthcare system where quality healthcare is a human right for all.

The ACA Medicaid Expansion Fills Current Gaps in Coverage



NOTE: The June 2012 Supreme Court decision in *National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius* maintained the Medicaid expansion, but limited the Secretary's authority to enforce it, effectively making the expansion optional for states. 138% FPL = \$15,856 for an individual and \$26,951 for a family of three in 2013.



PUT PEOPLE FIRST AND THE POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN

by Dan Jones

In December of 1967, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. announced plans for a "Poor People's Campaign." The Campaign would bring together poor people of all races and ethnicities, from every part of the country, from cities, small towns, rural areas, and Indian reservations, so that they could demand their basic rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In describing the pressing urgency for the campaign, he said:

"The dispossessed of this nation - the poor, both white and Negro - live in a cruelly unjust society. They must organize a revolution against that injustice, not against the lives of the persons who are their fellow citizens, but against the structures through which society is refusing to take means which have been called for, and which are at hand, to life the load of

poverty. The only real revolutionary, people say, is a man who has nothing to lose. There are millions of poor people in this country with very little, or even nothing, to lose. If they can be helped to take action together, they will do so with a freedom and a power that will be a new and unsettling force in our complacent national life." The plan was for thousands of these poor people to converge in Washington, D.C. in the Spring and Summer of 1968, set up a massive tent city on the national mall. Together, they would engage in an extended campaign of nonviolent civil disobedience until their demands - for jobs and economic security, education, peace, and more - were met. Over the longer term, the campaign would mark the beginning of a larger effort to unite the "new and unsettling force" that Rev. Dr. King talked about.

This would bring about what he called a "revolution of values" and a "radical redistribution of economic and political power." Rev. Dr. King was assassinated just weeks before the first caravans from around the country arrived in D.C. The campaign went forward, but the loss of Rev. Dr. King's strategic clarity, political leadership, and moral force was a major blow. That loss, among other factors, caused the campaign to fall far short of its aims.

Today, nearly 50 years later, we still live in a "cruelly unjust society." Many of the problems that Rev. Dr. King was responding to with his call for a Poor People's Campaign have only gotten worse over the decades. We now strive and struggle under the pressures of a global economy that is bigger, faster, and more powerful than

it was in Rev. Dr. King's day. In the late 1960's, the middle class was actually expanding; today more and more people who were once relatively secure are finding themselves faced with unemployment and underemployment, unmanageable debt, and a lack of healthcare. For communities that were struggling even in the late 1960's, ones which were left out of the "shared prosperity" of that era, life has continued to get harder. We live in a time when our economy produces more than ever before, but deprivation is growing. This is poverty in the midst of plenty, or abandonment in the midst of abundance.

movement we're able to build here in Pennsylvania, the people who benefit from our suffering are organized on a national and global level. We can't win in isolation from others like us, who see the need for our global society to move in a very different direction. We also know that we have so much to contribute to this campaign, because we're already living out Rev. Dr. King's vision every day in our work at Put People First! PA. We do so every time we come together across groups who are taught to fear each other and blame each other for the problems we face together. Put People First! PA is already right in the thick of a Poor People's



However, even with all the changes our economic and social system has gone through over the past 50 years, Rev. Dr. King's call to unite those of us who are dealing with its worst effects still shows us a way out of this crisis. That's why dozens of groups from around the country and around the world have joined the call to build a new Poor People's Campaign for today. Put People First! PA was one of the first groups to do so. We joined the call because we know that no matter how powerful of a human rights

Campaign. Our task now is to carry on in our work to unite people here in our communities and our state, and to find other leaders and groups like ourselves. We see that what we're really dealing with is a whole society badly in need of healing and a new kind of leadership. With this vision, we can start to build the "new and unsettling force" that Rev. Dr. King envisioned and fought to make a reality.

PARTNER SNAPSHOT: THE PENNSYLVANIA HEAD START ASSOCIATION

by Nijmie Dzurinko

Pennsylvania Head Start serves 35,000 of children across Pennsylvania, in every single county. This May marks the national Head Start program's 50th anniversary. We know Head Start as an early childhood program, but we don't always recognize it as the largest anti-poverty program in the United States, and its history is rarely discussed. Its origins lie in the Great Society programs of the Johnson Administration's War on Poverty which began in 1964-1965. Head Start meets the needs of struggling families through access to education, healthcare and other resources and social services. For example, all children in Head Start programs receive free health screenings and dental exams.



What makes Head Start especially unique is the Policy Councils that govern every program, which are made up of parents of children in the program. These Policy Councils are a space of leadership development for parents, who learn advocacy skills through their participation. This shared governance model means that Head Start parents



have final say in budgeting and hiring of staff for their programs. Pennsylvania Head Start recently partnered with Temple University to conduct a staff wellness survey. Over 72% of Head Start programs in the state participated in the survey, with more than 3,000 individual respondents. The survey found that between 20 and 30 percent of Head Start assistant teachers, home visitors, family support staff, and other workers don't have enough money for healthcare. Over 30% of those same groups reported not having enough money for utilities. One in five participants reported experiencing two or more economic stressors in the past 12 months.

A majority of home visitors, teachers and assistant teachers, and family support staff reported high levels of stress. The purpose of the survey, from the report's introduction "was to describe the physical health and psychological well-being of the staff and how it related to functioning at work. The long-term goal of this project is to increase school readiness for children in Head Start by improving the health and well-being of

the staff." The survey findings show that Head Start staff themselves are struggling with many of the same issues as the families in their programs. Additionally, Head Start staff are directly involved in the lives of families struggling with meeting their needs and know first hand what is happening in communities across the state and the nation.

Put People First has participated in Head Start's annual conference, offering leadership training for parents and staff, and we've connected with Head Start programs in local communities. Head Start does incredible work to put people first by serving families and empowering parents across Pennsylvania and we are proud to call them a partner.

GET INVOLVED WITH PUT PEOPLE FIRST! PA

PPF is a grassroots organization, which means it takes all of us contributing whatever we can in order for us continue to grow and build power. It also means that we're committed to finding ways for everyone to be able to participate and to grow as a person and a leader through their involvement. Here are some ways you can get involved:

1. Join a local Organizing Committee (OC). For more on what our OCs do, check out page 2. Right now we have OCs in Philadelphia, York, Gettysburg, and Harrisburg. If you don't live in Southeast or South Central PA, you can still talk to your family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers about Put People First! PA. Email Eliel Acosta (elielacostasolalinde@gmail.com) to learn how you can start spreading the word and building Put People First, wherever you live.

2. Join one of our statewide teams. We're a member-led organization, so the vast majority of the every-day work of building PPF is done by volunteers. We have statewide teams focused on our campaign strategy, building our membership base, media and communications, fundraising, and political education and leadership development. No matter where you are, what you're passionate about, or what kind of skills you have, there's a place for



you on one of these teams. To learn more about our teams and how you can join one, email Dan Jones (drjones18@gmail.com).

3. Become an official member. Members get access to our Put People First online message board and are invited to special events and trainings. You'll be the first to know what's going on with PPF in your area. Membership dues help us be less reliant on funding from philanthro-



pists and big foundations, so that we can stay politically independent. We can't outspend the people who want to maintain the status quo, but we can come together and pool our resources.

Dues start at \$3/month, and we're committed to working with you no matter what your

financial situation is. Go to putpeoplefirstpa.org/member to sign up. If you have any questions, email Nijmie Dzurinko (nijmied@gmail.com).

4. Sign up for our e-newsletter. The best way to stay up to date on the latest from PPF is through our e-newsletter, which includes information about upcoming events, updates on our campaign, and stories from our members. Email putpeoplefirstpa@gmail.com to sign up.

LEADERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN PUT PEOPLE FIRST! PA

by the Put People First! PA Political Education and Leadership Development Team

Why is leadership critical for an organization like Put People First! PA?

Put People First! PA is an organization of regular people who are struggling to meet our fundamental needs--such as housing, healthcare, education, and healthy food. These needs are our basic human rights, things everyone needs to live a life with dignity. We're coming together through Put People First! PA to secure our human rights, build community, develop our voice, and build power. Throughout U.S. history it's been just such organizations, and the social movements they've created and been part of, which have enabled the people most affected by problems in their communities and society at large to lead the way in resolving them. In order for an organization like Put People First! PA to

play such a role we need strong leaders who come from the communities most affected by problems in our society in all our diversity.

In our fight to realize everybody's



human rights in our state, we will come up against powerful economic and political forces that benefit from maintaining the status quo. For example, there are those who profit from treating healthcare as a

way to make profit, instead of as a human right and public good. They use their money to influence elected officials and keep a real discussion of universal healthcare out of the public debate. They play on divide and conquer tactics, such as racism or scapegoating immigrants, to keep people divided. They also rely on a culture of individualism, isolation, and political disengagement to keep us from coming together and securing our rights. Additionally, the fact that we're committed to being politically independent from big foundations and philanthropists (whose money often comes with strings attached), and the size and diversity of our state, mean that we have to develop a high level of leadership at the local level all across Pennsylvania – we can't rely on hiring a bunch of full-time staff

organizers. The reality that we face requires that we develop many leaders who can overcome these challenges and build a powerful movement for our human rights. For an organization like Put People First! PA, leaders are the foundation that enables a broad and growing membership base.



What does it mean to be a leader in Put People First! PA?

PPF-PA leaders are clear, competent, committed and connected. Our clarity, through training, study and reflection, enables us to make correct assessments of problems and put forth solutions. Our competence in thinking strategically and tactically, planning and carrying our campaigns, and organizing our communities enables us to unite people so that we can work together towards a common end. Our commitment to the human dignity of all and to a just society motivates our actions and sustains our engagement and contribution to the cause. Our deep connection to communities that are struggling to meet their needs ensures the development and success of our organizing and movement building. It enables us to identify problems that are most pressing and to understand and represent the needs and demands of our base.

Put People First! PA leaders understand the relationship of a particular campaign to broader movement building. We understand and know how to apply our organization's human rights organizing approach to secure both our immediate and long-term goals. Put People First! PA leaders assess and solve problems, put forward analysis, vision and strategy, drive and bottom line processes, take initiative and make things happen. Most importantly, Put People First! PA leaders are committed to constantly developing both other leaders and ourselves through our work together.

How do we develop leaders in Put People First! PA?

On the political education and leadership development team, our approach to leadership, leadership development and organizing in general comes out of our collective experience in Put People First! PA as well as the other organizing experiences we bring to this effort. We see Put People First! PA as in the process of developing a new model of organizing that isn't overly reliant on lots of full time paid staff people but rather depends on member leaders who take on major responsibility and initiative in building our statewide

organization. Such an approach requires us to prioritize leadership development and to make it clear to everyone in Put People First! PA that leadership development is a part of what all members do in the organization.

We all have the ability to be leaders, but actually playing a leadership role takes systematic attention and training. In Put People First! PA we've observed that leaders develop through a combination of four practices. First, by participating in policy campaigns for human rights we get to act in a focused, sustained and coordinated way with other members, see firsthand how social change happens and develop a sense of the power of our collective action. We call this practice political activity. Second, by participating in systematic political education and organizing training we have a chance to reflect upon and study the lessons from our own campaign activity as well as the lessons of other social movements, to study the economics and politics of the social problems we are taking on, and to learn the organizing skills and techniques we'll need to know in order to be effective leaders. We call this practice political education. Third, by taking on responsibility for a set of tasks or



an area of work, we learn how to solve problems and overcome challenges, how to think about our own and others' development, and how to be accountable for a project and to a group of people. We call this practice political responsibility. Finally, by working collectively with others, including in planning, sharing information, making decisions, carrying out work plans and evaluating our work, we develop deep relationships,

confidence in ourselves and others, commitment to the cause and a sense of real ownership of the organization. We call this practice political collectivity.

We're building a leadership development path along which our leaders progress in assuming new responsibilities and developing our capacities to carry out these responsibilities. It's important to us that in this process we think about and mentor each other and that we get the training and support we need to grow into and carry out our evolving leadership roles.

This is all a work in progress and we're all learning a lot as we do this work together. What has helped you to develop as the leader that you are? What have you seen develop leaders in Put People First! PA?

What can you do to develop leaders in Put People First! PA?