

## Women Play a Key Role as Health Care Decision Makers, Messengers for Health Coverage

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By Guest Blogger Jennifer Sullivan, Director of Best Practices Institute, Enroll America

January 26, 2015

Fernando's mom was on a mission. She woke him up at 7:30 on a Saturday morning, dragged him to a nearby clinic, and forced him to wait in line for an appointment with someone who could sign him up for insurance under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Thanks to his mom, Fernando found out he could get financial help to enroll in a comprehensive plan that would cost him just \$22 a month. "I was forced to come here — but now I can walk away a covered man," [he told a local reporter](#).



Chalk it up to the power of moms. And girlfriends. And sisters. While plenty of men and women benefit from the Affordable Care Act, women benefit particularly from new protections and new possibilities because they're historically the health care decision makers in families. Women are uniquely poised to play a powerful role as messengers for friends and family members.

Under the Affordable Care Act, preventive care is free, including well-woman visits, cancer screenings, breastfeeding counseling and supplies, domestic violence screenings and counseling, STI screenings, [and much more](#). All health plans on the new marketplaces must cover maternity and newborn care. And there are [new kinds of financial help available](#) to boot, to make sure these far-from-skipmy plans are within reach for families with budgets of all sizes.

Quality, comprehensive health insurance plans like the ones available on the marketplaces are especially important for women. Women use health care services more than men do — in 2011, women accounted for [57 percent](#) of all costs from doctors' appointments. Women need affordable health coverage, but [nearly one in five adult women](#) under the age of 65 didn't have health insurance in 2011. And [more than of half of women](#) reported that they'd gone without needed treatments because they couldn't afford them.

With the new options under the ACA, more women can enjoy the financial security and peace of mind that comes from having health insurance that fits both their needs and their budget.

Now that these new options exist under the new health care reform law, the next step is to get the word out. That's where people like Fernando's mom come in. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, women are more likely than men to be their family's primary decision maker — an [estimated 80 percent of family health care decisions are made by women](#).

Women are powerful motivators for their loved ones — luckily for Fernando, and countless others like him, his mom didn't take no for an answer. Women like her make up two-thirds of the volunteer base for Get Covered America, a [grassroots campaign](#) that lets people know about how they could get covered and stay covered.

With the help of trusted messengers like Fernando's mom, all families can now take advantage of the new health insurance options and financial help available under the Affordable Care Act.

Who makes the majority of the healthcare decisions in your family? Is anyone helping you find health coverage and financial help available through the ACA? Let us know in the comments section.

*Jennifer Sullivan is Director, Best Practices Institute at Enroll America, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization whose mission is to ensure that all Americans are enrolled in and retain health coverage. The Best Practices Institute works with national and state stakeholders to identify, develop, and disseminate information about outreach and enrollment best practices for Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and the Health Insurance Marketplace.*

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