



# Health Care Consumer

The Newsletter of the Champaign County  
Health Care Consumers

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## Health Care Crisis in Champaign County: IL Attorney General Files Lawsuit Against Carle Clinic and Christie Clinic

– by Claudia Lennhoff

Champaign County residents are experiencing a massive access to health care crisis. Despite an ample supply of health care providers, close to 40% (approximately 75,000 people) of Champaign County's population is locked out of the health care system. Too many people cannot obtain timely and affordable primary, preventive, and specialty health care services at local clinics. CCHCC has organized the Health Care Access Task Force in response to this crisis.

The crisis began in 2003, when both major physician clinics in the Champaign County community, Christie Clinic and Carle Clinic, began enacting policies that limit or deny appointments and services to:

- patients without insurance (approximately 54,990 individuals);
- patients with Medicaid insurance (approximately 20,449 individuals); and
- patients who may be insured but have medical debt (untold number of individuals).



*Community members strategize at a meeting of the Health Care Access Task Force*

As a result, these patients have virtually nowhere to turn for health care services.

CCHCC's Executive Director, Claudia Lennhoff, said, "We turned to other health advocacy and public interest law organizations all over the country. No one knew of any community in the U.S. experiencing a health care access crisis of this magnitude. The reason the crisis is so massive here in Champaign County is because there are two major physician clinics that employ over 90% of the community's doctors. When they get together and enact similar discriminatory policies against certain classes or groups, people have no place to turn to get their health care."

CCHCC turned to the IL Attorney General's office for help, seeking to understand whether the Clinics' policies and practices were legal (they are clearly unethical), and what recourse affected consumers might have. In part, as a result of CCHCC's complaints, and complaints from others in the community (including other health care providers and social service organizations), the IL Attorney General undertook an investigation of the Clinics' policies and practices. The investigation resulted in the IL Attorney General filing an antitrust lawsuit against Carle Clinic and Christie Clinic on June 14, 2007.

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