



Campaign Raises Awareness about Health Care Coverage for Children

From the CDF Minnesota September 2001 Newsletter

Advertisements, billboards, bus sides, bus stops, and television will tout the message about health care coverage for children this fall as part of a public awareness campaign aimed at encouraging parents to get health insurance and regular check-ups for their children.

The campaign, sponsored by the Cover All Kids Coalition, kicked off at the Minnesota State Fair in August. The Cover All Kids Coalition staffed a booth at the fair to give out information on Minnesota's public health insurance programs and introduce a new statewide kids health care hotline, 866-489-4899, and website, coverallkids.org. By visiting the website or calling the hotline, parents can receive assistance in applying for Minnesota's free or reduced-cost health care programs and information on preventive services for kids.

There are nearly 60,000 uninsured children in Minnesota, according to the preliminary results of a statewide survey on the uninsured conducted by the Minnesota Department of Health. Most (88%) live in households where one or both parents are working but don't have access to employer-sponsored insurance or the premiums for this type of insurance are too high.

"These working families often are unaware that they qualify for public health care coverage," says Jim Koppel, director of the Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota and co-chair of the Cover All Kids Coalition. "Our goal is to get the word out that affordable health care coverage is available and regular check-ups for kids are essential." National statistics indicate that most working families currently without insurance are most likely eligible for public programs.

Minnesota offers three public health care programs — MinnesotaCare, Medical Assistance (MA) and General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC)— that cover check-ups, hospitalization, immunizations, doctor visits, prescription drugs and other services for eligible participants. MA and GAMC are no cost programs aimed at low-income individuals and are operated through the counties. MinnesotaCare is a state operated reduced-cost health coverage program aimed at working families. Eligible families pay a sliding fee monthly premium based on their income and family size. A family of four earning more than \$48,000 a year may be eligible for MinnesotaCare.

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"Getting kids health care coverage is the first step in keeping kids healthy," says Koppel. Recently released national survey results show that parents with children who do not have health coverage are seven times more likely to delay or not get medical care for their kids than parents with coverage. In fact, 21% of uninsured children are going without health services when they need them because their parents cannot afford to pay for treatments.

"Minnesotans don't have to make these choices," says Michael Scandrett, executive director of the Minnesota Council of Health Plans and co-chair of the Cover All Kids Coalition. "There are viable health coverage options available in this state."

To introduce the new hotline and website, billboards, bus sides and bus stops featuring Minnesota Viking Cris Carter will be displayed throughout the Metro area. A television PSA will be distributed to local television stations and ads are being developed for selected local media. In addition, Covering Kids Minnesota staff is working with the St. Paul Area Council of Churches to distribute book-marks and flyers with information on health care coverage to school children through the Council's School Tools drive. Through the School Tools drive, Covering Kids anticipates to reach nearly 3,000 low-income school children and their parents by packing bookmarks and flyers in backpacks filled with free school supplies.

This fall's public awareness campaign is the first step in a multi-year campaign to get the word out about health care coverage and the importance of preventive services. The campaign is being funded by the Cover All Kids Coalition with contributions from PreferredOne, UCare Minnesota, Medica and Metropolitan Health Plan as well as other coalition members.

For more information on the fall public awareness campaign or the activities of the Cover All Kids Coalition, contact Elaine Cunningham at CDF-MN at 651-227-6121.

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