



James G. Koppel

Jim Koppel is Regional Director of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), a national non-profit child advocacy organization based in Washington, DC, whose mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. Koppel oversees outreach, organizing and advocacy projects in Minnesota, Iowa, South Dakota, North Dakota and Montana.

Koppel began his work at CDF in 1996 as state director of the CDF Minnesota office. During his time as the state director, Minnesota made significant public policy improvements in children's health coverage, child welfare, low-income family tax policy, and welfare reform (Minnesota is the only state that actually moves families out of poverty as part of their welfare policy).

Additionally, CDF Minnesota also has helped thousands of families get the health care, child care and tax benefits that they are entitled to through their tax and benefit outreach and enrollment efforts. After years of development, the Bridge to Benefits project and web based screening tool was launched in 2007. This allows families to be screened in minutes and immediately be shown potential eligibility for public programs such as health care coverage, child care subsidies, low income tax credits, food stamps, energy assistance and other nutritional programs such as WIC and free or reduced school meals.

As CDF Minnesota moved to become a regional office, Bridge to Benefits has expanded to Montana in 2008 and to North and South Dakota in 2009. CDF also established an office and full time staff person in Montana and in North Dakota during that time. Health care expansions have occurred in both states in 2009 due the initial efforts of the new offices. Over 30,000 children will now be eligible for health care coverage in those two states alone.

Previously, he was the Vice President of Policy for the Minnesota Hospital and Healthcare Partnership for ten years. During his tenure, he took a two-year leave of absence to serve as the Executive Director of the Minnesota Health Care Access Commission. This Commission developed the initial plan for universal health care coverage, which eventually led to the passage of MinnesotaCare in 1992.

Jim received his B.S. from Mount Union College in Alliance, Ohio and his Masters in Social Work from Howard University in Washington, D.C. Other work experience includes policy and advocacy work for the National Association of Counties and health benefits consulting to business and government.

Jim's wife, Lora, is a nurse and they have two daughters, Molly and Anna who are both currently attending college.