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COMMUNITY LEADERS LAUNCH CAMPAIGN TO ENROLL UNINSURED CHILDREN IN CHIP, CHILDREN'S MEDICAID

New research shows that nationally the number of uninsured children declines as enrollment in CHIP program increases

Back-to-school campaign urges parents to call 1(877) KIDS-NOW to find out if their uninsured children are eligible

HOUSTON – Local community and business leaders announced an intensive two month campaign to enroll eligible uninsured children in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Children's Medicaid. A new study analyzing government data was also unveiled that suggests that the number of uninsured kids nationally is on the decline. According to the study, that decline can be attributed to more kids being covered under public health care programs such as Medicaid and CHIP.

“The State of Kids’ Coverage” was released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) at an enrollment event to kick off the *Covering Kids & Families* Back-to-School Campaign, a nationwide effort with an intensive focus in Houston to enroll eligible children in Medicaid and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) during the back-to-school season.

The study also reveals that Texas made significant progress in reducing its number of uninsured children before cuts to the Texas Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) took effect on September 1, 2003. The study shows that the percentage of children in Texas who have private health care coverage decreased 9 percent from 1997-98 to 2003-2004, meaning over 43,000 fewer Texas kids had private coverage. The percentage of kids enrolled in Medicaid or *CHIP* increased by 41% during this time, providing more than 635,000 more kids with public coverage. These programs helped reduce the number of uninsured children by more than 87,000, demonstrating the importance of public health coverage programs as a safety net for families.

Now that the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) has been partially restored, community leaders are eager to rebuild enrollment. Dental, vision, hospice and mental health benefits have been restored to the CHIP benefits package, premiums have been reduced and will be more convenient for families to pay, and additional funds have been allocated to increase enrollment.

“Medicaid and *CHIP* have provided a much-needed safety net for Texas’ children,” said Martha Martinez Gomez, chair of the 650 member Gulf Coast *CHIP* Coalition. “Because of these programs, working parents don’t have to choose between filling the refrigerator and filling a prescription.”

“We know that children who have health insurance are better prepared to learn in school and better equipped to succeed in life,” said Barbara Best, executive director of the Children’s Defense Fund of Texas. “The back-to-school season is an ideal time to make sure that children have the health coverage they need.” The latest Census data shows that of the 8.3 million children who remain uninsured nationwide, more than 1.3 million live in Texas. Most of these children are eligible for low-cost or free health care coverage through

Medicaid or *CHIP*, but have not yet enrolled. Texas families of four earning up to \$40,000 or more may qualify, and parents can call toll-free **1 (877) KIDS-NOW** to find out if their children are eligible.

The *Covering Kids & Families* Back-to-School Campaign will reach thousands of Texas families during August and September through the following events:

- The **15th city-wide outreach drive at 20 Fiesta, Mart, Inc.** stores on **Saturday, August 12th** from 10:00am to 2:00pm. 14 previous drives have assisted over 18,000 children in applying for CHIP and Children's Medicaid.
- The **third-city-wide enrollment event at 15 McDonald's Restaurants** on **Saturday, August 19th** from 8:00am to 1:00pm.
- A collaboration with the **Houston Dynamo Major League Soccer team**, who will show *Covering Kids & Families* PSAs and banners at local soccer games and host a Children's Health Coverage Day on **Saturday, September 30**.
- **Clear Channel Outdoor** has donated **100 billboards** promoting CHIP enrollment that will be posted in neighborhoods with high numbers of uninsured children.
- Through a partnership with **20 Harris County school districts**, CHIP/Medicaid outreach materials will be distributed to over **700,000 Houston school children**.
- Materials will also be distributed through the 650-member, 16 County *Gulf Coast CHIP Coalition*, local businesses, and community-based organizations;
- Coalition partners will also promote the **1(877) KIDS-NOW** toll-free number statewide.

The Gulf Coast CHIP Coalition includes 650 individual members and over 200 organizations that support the Coalition's principles and mission of ensuring access to health care for all children through a seamless delivery system.

Today's report was prepared by analysts at the State Health Access Data Assistance Center (SHADAC), located at the University of Minnesota. The report analyzes data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics 2003 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) and the U.S. Census Bureau's 1998, 1999, 2004, and 2005 Current Population Surveys (CPS).

To view the research report, locate *Covering Kids & Families* activities, or download materials in English or Spanish, log on to www.coveringkidsandfamilies.org.

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Fast Facts:

There are more than 1.3 million uninsured kids in Texas, and most are eligible for low-cost or free health care coverage through Medicaid or *CHIP*.

Children in a family of four earning up to \$40,000 a year or more may qualify.
Eligibility is based on family size and income.

Parents should call toll-free **1(877) KIDS-NOW** to find out if their children are eligible.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 30 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.

The University of Minnesota's State Health Access Data Assistance Center (SHADAC) helps states monitor rates of health insurance coverage and to understand factors associated with uninsurance. SHADAC provides targeted policy analysis and technical assistance to states that are conducting their own health insurance surveys and/or using data from national surveys. Information can be located at www.shadac.umn.edu.