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Lt. Governor Guadagno Highlights State Resource that Helps Families Pay their Children's Catastrophic Medical Expenses

Tuesday, December 13, 2016 Tags: [Pension and Health Benefits](#)



Nearly \$2.3 Million in Grants Awarded to 120 Applicants Since July

Trenton, NJ – Continuing the administration's celebration of its Season of Service, Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno today joined with families that received grants from the Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund (CICRF) to educate residents about the Fund, and to encourage eligible families to access this important state resource.

CICRF grants provide financial assistance to applicants with costly medical bills associated with their child's illness that are not covered by health insurance. CICRF already has awarded nearly \$2.3 million to 120 applicants in the first half of state Fiscal Year 2017.

"For families that have a child with a catastrophic illness, the cost for medical care can quickly exceed their income and deplete their savings," said Lt. Governor Guadagno while meeting with the families in the Governor's outer office. "The Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund can lend a hand when a family has run out of all other options."

CICRF was established in 1988 and has distributed more than \$171 million in grants to 8,429 families. In Fiscal Year 2016, nearly \$7 million was distributed to 369 eligible applicants in need. New Jersey residents with children who have uncovered medical expenses may apply for grants to reimburse specific, documented, medically-related costs. Applications are investigated, authenticated and reviewed by the Fund's staff and Commission for grant disbursement.

CICRF is a dedicated, revolving, non-lapsing trust fund collected from an annual contribution of \$1.50 per employee by all employers operating under the New Jersey Unemployment Compensation Law.

"Our commission members are committed to fulfilling the mission of the Fund. The Fund exists to provide financial relief for families facing devastatingly high uncovered medical expenses for their children regardless of their income," said Dr. Janice Pronnicki, the Commission's chairperson. "We hope that today's event will make more families aware that they may be eligible for help from the Fund to assist with costs related to their child's necessary medical treatment, equipment and other expenses."

Under the CICRF's guidelines, a catastrophic illness is any sickness or condition, acute or chronic, for which expenses are incurred that are not fully covered by insurance, state or federal programs, or other sources. Families are eligible if they are legal permanent residents of New Jersey for at least three months prior to the date of application, if the child was 21 years or younger when the expenses were incurred, and if expenses exceed 10 percent of the family's income up to \$100,000 or 15 percent of any income over \$100,000.

GREENBERG FAMILY

Henry Greenberg of Morris County is diagnosed with congenital cytomegalovirus and cerebral palsy. He has developmental delays that affect his mobility and ability to care for himself. Henry can walk short distances while using a gait trainer, but he requires the use of a wheelchair for long distances. The Fund assisted the family with home modifications that allow Henry to safely enter and exit his home. The family also received assistance with physician costs and durable medical equipment including a standing harness and a head stabilizer. This child's primary source of nutrition, specialized formula, was not covered by his insurance until his third birthday, and the Fund assisted with this cost as well.

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THE STEPHENSON FAMILY

The Stephenson triplets, Benjamin, Evelyn, and Samuel of Bergen County, were born prematurely, at 33 weeks gestation. The children all were delivered in one hospital before being transported to another, closer hospital. The family called to make sure the new hospital was in-network for their insurance plan, and it was, but unfortunately, the physicians that attended to the triplets were not in-network. The family appealed the insurance coverage denials, but ultimately they were left with significant medical debt. The Fund was able to assist with these uncovered expenses. All three children now are healthy and doing well.

SIEGELMAN FAMILY

After several liver infections resulted in hospitalizations and liver failure, Sara Siegelman of Middlesex County had a liver transplant in early 2014. The liver transplant was successful but she required ongoing medical support. CICRF helped with physician services, pharmacy, and hospital bills that were not fully covered by the family's insurance plan.

HARTKOPF FAMILY

Lindsey Hartkopf of Gloucester County is a young adult diagnosed with Lennox-Gastaut syndrome, a severe type of intractable epilepsy. The family reports that she began experiencing seizures since six months of age, after receiving the DPT vaccination. Her condition has deteriorated over time, as she is having more seizures daily. However, while she continues to have between six to ten seizures every day, treatment has helped shorten their duration. Per her neurologist's recommendation, Lindsey receives skilled nursing care for at least sixteen hours per day in order to remain in her home and live with her mother, Ms. Deborah Anderson. The family received assistance through the Fund, including a bathroom modification that has a roll-in shower and roll-under sink to make it accessible and safe for Lindsey. The family also received assistance through CICRF with an outdoor concrete wheelchair ramp and nursing care costs that were not fully covered through insurance.

WRIGHT FAMILY

Michael Wright Jr. of Monmouth County is diagnosed with cerebral palsy. He required extensive neurosurgery that was not completely covered by his medical insurance. The night he was discharged from the hospital he started complaining of head pain, and started falling in and out of sleep. His parents were unsure of his true pain level, as he is unable to communicate verbally. They brought him back to the hospital and it was determined that he required an additional surgery. With two surgeons present, this child underwent successful neurosurgery, and the Fund was able to assist with the uncovered medical bills. This surgery was successful, and the child was discharged home from the hospital within a few days.

For more information about the Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund, visit njcatastrophicfund.org or call 1-800-335-FUND (3863). Applications can be submitted electronically.

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