

Office of the Governor

PO BOX 004
TRENTON, NJ 08625

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Steffanie Bell
609-777-2600

RELEASE: August 20, 1999

Governor's Weekly Radio Address Discusses Expansion of KidCare

Gov. Christie Whitman provides a weekly radio message to radio stations throughout the state. Each week, the message focuses on a different concern or event of interest to New Jerseyans.

This week's message discusses the expansion of KidCare, a state health insurance program for children. The Governor recently expanded the program to reach children in families making up to 350 percent of the federal poverty level, the maximum allowed by federal law. Also, the Governor has eliminated the waiting period formerly associated with the program.

In addition, grants are being made available to organizations who recruit children into the program. It is expected that 60,000 more children will be covered under the expanded program.

Attached is a text of the message.

The radio message can be accessed by calling the Governor's actuality line at 609-292-3249. It will be available today, beginning at noon, and will run through the weekend.

Radio Message for New Jersey KidCare Expansion

Hello, this is Christie Whitman speaking to you as a governor and as a parent.

Parents want their children to live well, learn well, and stay well. But for some working families, staying well is a challenge because they can't afford the high-quality health care every child deserves.

A program called New Jersey KidCare has been established to ensure that the tens of thousands of uninsured children across the state get the medicine, see the doctors, and receive the attention they need to grow up healthy and strong. In a moment, I'll give you a phone number to call for information or an application.

Last year, KidCare subsidized comprehensive health care to uninsured children living in families that earn below 200 percent of the poverty level. The program assisted a lot of families, but it wasn't enough.

That's why I have announced three more steps we are taking to achieve our goal of making sure every child in New Jersey has health insurance.

First and foremost, new legislation allows KidCare to serve children at much higher income levels - up to 350 percent of the poverty level, the maximum

allowed by law. A family of four with an annual income of \$58,450 would now qualify for the program, up from the former limit of \$33,400. We expect approximately 60,000 children to become eligible for this new component of KidCare.

Second, we are changing the provisions of the program so that previously insured children can become immediately covered under KidCare.

Finally, we are addressing the increasingly commonplace problem of small businesses not offering a health plan, leaving many without insurance. I will create a plan to help small businesses provide health insurance that both they and their employees can afford.

Unfortunately, the expansion of KidCare will be wasted if we don't increase awareness of the program. So far, more than 35,000 children are enrolled in the program. But an estimated 120,000 children are now eligible but not enrolled.

We are spreading the word about KidCare with newspaper ads and through brochures and other information that will be distributed in schools, day care homes, child care agencies, and health centers.

To further encourage development, we have budgeted \$900,000 over two years in grants for community-based organizations that provide outreach and enrollment programs for KidCare.

Still, we need your help. If you think that your family - or a family you know - might qualify, I urge you to contact the KidCare office for an application as soon as possible.

Please call 1-800-701-0710 to find out how you can apply for New Jersey KidCare. We have multilingual operators ready to take your call and send you an application. That's 1-800-701-0710.

In New Jersey, an investment in our children is an investment in the future of our state. They deserve to enjoy the best of health. And that's what makes New Jersey special: we care enough to give our children the best. Thank you.