

## Office of the Governor

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### NEWS RELEASE

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#### **Governor Whitman Kicks Off Public Awareness Campaign for Children's Health Insurance Program**

Gov. Christie Whitman today kicked off a two-year media campaign to enroll the children of working poor parents into the state's subsidized health insurance program, NJ KidCare.

The Department of Human Services' campaign, which will cost \$1.2 million over 2 years, will include radio and video messages as well as billboards, posters, bus signs, and outreach through state agencies, healthcare providers and community organizations.

"All of New Jersey's children deserve access to the medical care they need to grow up strong and healthy," Gov. Whitman said. "This program will help us ensure that our children get the medical attention they need right away. And it will help us to prevent minor illnesses from becoming anything more serious."

Children from families who earn less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for the health insurance, with parents contributing co-payments depending upon their income. For example, a family of three earning less than \$27,300 is eligible. Families earning between 150-200 percent of the poverty level (\$20,475 - \$27,300 per year for a family of three) are required to pay a maximum \$15 per month premium regardless of how many children are enrolled in NJ KidCare.

"All of these efforts are designed to help us enroll even more children in New Jersey KidCare. Affordable health care coverage is crucial. New Jersey's families shouldn't have to worry about the cost of sending their daughter or son to the doctor," Gov. Whitman said.

At a press conference unveiling the new promotional materials at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick, Gov. Whitman said the program is able to cover 100,000 children, but about 18,000 are enrolled. The Governor said the media campaign is intended to boost enrollment.

Human Services Commissioner Michele K. Guhl encouraged parents to call the NJ KidCare hotline (1-800-701-0710) if their children are uninsured. "NJ KidCare is not welfare, it is the assistance working parents need to continue providing the best for their children. Unfortunately, health insurance is expensive and many parents simply can't afford it for their children without a little help," Commissioner Guhl said.

The media campaign is the latest effort by DHS to enroll more children into the program. Among the other outreach efforts by DHS are:

- The Division of Taxation is identifying families who meet the income guidelines and information packets will be mailed directly to all eligible families.
- The Department of Treasury is including a NJ KidCare message on the check stubs of all state employees.
- The Department of Health and Senior Services is mailing NJ KidCare information to 1,500 new parents each week.
- The Department of Banking and Insurance is sending NJ KidCare material to all state institutions for display.
- The Division of Motor Vehicles will mail pamphlets along with all license and car registration renewals forms.

Along with an \$88.5 million federal grant, NJ KidCare is funded with \$47.5 million in state funds including money from a dedicated tax on tobacco products.

Children eligible for NJ KidCare are covered through an HMO from birth to age 18. In some cases, children must have been uninsured for at least 12 months to receive the coverage, which includes all preventative services, hospitalization, physician care, lab and x-ray services, prescription drugs, mental health services, dental, vision, and hearing services.

**Families Eligible for KidCare**

# of Family Members	Maximum Annual Income (200 Percent of Federal Poverty Level)
1	\$16,100
2	\$21,700
3	\$27,300
4	\$32,900
5	\$38,500
6	\$44,100