

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Healthy Kids a Team Effort in New Jersey 51,000 Kids Insured Under State Health Care Program

Keeping New Jersey kids healthy and providing parents with an affordable choice in health coverage is a hallmark of New Jersey's KidCare program. The Governor announced today that 51,000 children and their families are reaping the benefits of the program.

The Governor praised a public and private partnership that has increased the number of covered children by 20,000 in the past six months. In addition to announcing the new numbers, the Governor highlighted the efforts of Schering-Plough, who has contributed \$50,000 to NJ KidCare awareness in Elizabeth.

The company will feature an Internet link to KidCare information and enrollment applications on its new Asthma/Allergy website, www.schoolasthma.com and is also providing Union County's school nurses with Internet-ready laptop computers to help them connect to the website and assist in the effort to enroll uninsured children in KidCare.

"Here in New Jersey, our families come from so many different backgrounds and cultures. We speak so many languages, celebrate so many faiths, and carry on so many traditions. We are truly a people of many faces, but we are one family," said Gov. Whitman. "One of the most important things we share is the desire to have our families grow up strong and healthy. We want our sons and daughters to live well, learn well, and stay well."

"My thanks to Schering-Plough and all our public and corporate partners," continued the Governor. "Working together, we can ensure that every child in our state has access to quality health care services. Working together, we can give every child in our one New Jersey family something they can be thankful for every day of the year-the gift of health."

"We may not have a cure for the common cold yet, but we have made great progress toward universal health care for our kids with New Jersey KidCare," said Human Services Commissioner Michele Guhl. "I'm proud of what we've done to enroll tens of thousands of children who, prior to this program, didn't have a family doctor or access to the kind of preventative care that helps keep sniffles from turning into something more serious."

The NJ KidCare program was established by the Children's Health Care Coverage Act, signed by Governor Whitman in 1997. The program subsidizes comprehensive health care to uninsured children. KidCare services include well child and other preventative services, hospitalization, physician care, lab and x-ray services, prescription drugs, mental health services as well as dental, vision and hearing services. Families pay premiums on a sliding scale according to income.

The Governor expanded the program in July, broadening the eligibility for the program and increasing the promotion of the program. The program was expanded to include families making between 200 and 350 percent of the federal poverty level. This includes families of four with an annual income of \$58,450, up from the former limit of \$33,400. The expansion also eliminated a six-month uninsured waiting period before families struggling to pay their own health insurance costs could become eligible.

Public awareness efforts were also stepped up through the establishment of partnerships with schools, childcare organizations and health care entities to help reach families whose children may be eligible. In addition to Schering-Plough, K-Mart, McDonalds and the U.S. Post Office are all part of the effort to insure all eligible children in the state.

New Jerseyans can call 1-800-701-0710 to request an application or to receive more information.

