

# Office of the Governor

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Governor's Weekly Radio Message Addresses Expansion of New Jersey 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 the Governor discusses her commitment to provide affordable health insurance for children by expanding the New Jersey KidCare program. Last year she announced that New Jersey KidCare would subsidize comprehensive health care to uninsured children under 18 years of age who live below the 200 percent of the poverty level, which means \$27,300 for a family of three and \$32,900 for a family of four. The Governor has announced three more steps to achieve her goal of making health insurance available to every child in the state.

First, New Jersey KidCare coverage will be expanded to serve children at higher income levels-up to \$47,775 for a family of three and \$57,575 for a family of four. Family contributions will be on a sliding scale. Secondly, the Governor is directing the Children's Health Insurance Workgroup to create a plan to help families that are employed by small businesses that do not offer an affordable health plan. Thirdly, children who do not have insurance will be brought into New Jersey KidCare more quickly. The waiting period will be cut from one year to six months. Thousands of children will be able to get coverage more quickly.

Attached is the 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.

### **GOVERNOR'S WEEKLY RADIO MESSAGE MARCH 19, 1999 EXPANDING NEW JERSEY KIDCARE**

Parents want the best for their kids. They want their sons and daughters to live well, learn well, and stay well. But for some families, staying well is a challenge because working parents can't afford the kind of high-quality health care their children need and deserve.

Last year, I announced New Jersey KidCare, a plan to provide affordable health insurance for more than 100,000 children. New Jersey KidCare subsidizes comprehensive health care to uninsured children under 18 years of age who live in families that earn below 200 percent of the poverty level, which means \$27,300 for a family of three and \$32,900 for a family of four.

The services include well-child and other preventive services, hospitalization, physician care, lab and x-ray services, prescription drugs, and mental health services.

It's taking time to reach all the families who could qualify for KidCare, but I won't be satisfied merely to reach the children eligible for the current program. My ultimate goal is to make health insurance available to every child in this state.

That's why I have announced three more steps we are taking to achieve that goal.

First and foremost, we will expand KidCare coverage. We will now serve children at much higher income levels - up to \$47,775 for a family of three and \$57,575 for a family of four. Family contributions will be on a sliding scale. The more a family earns, the larger their contribution toward the policy. The services will be the same as those covered under most employer policies.

Second, we will address the problem that many working families face: a job at a small business that does not include an affordable health care plan. I intend to create a mechanism to help small businesses provide health insurance that both they and their employees can afford. So I am directing my Children's Health Insurance Workgroup to hammer out a plan by this spring.

The third step we are taking this year will bring children who don't have insurance into New Jersey KidCare more quickly. At my direction, the Commissioner of Human Services has cut the waiting time for KidCare coverage from one year to six months. That means thousands more children will be able to get coverage more quickly.

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.

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. Or you can reach the program's Internet website by clicking on the KidCare logo on the State of New Jersey home page, [www.state.nj.us](http://www.state.nj.us).

With your help, we can give every child in every New Jersey family the best chance to grow up healthy and strong.