



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Alabama to participate in national initiative to increase coverage for uninsured children

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Alabama is one of only eight states selected to participate in a \$15 million four-year grant initiative to increase enrollment and retention of eligible children in Medicaid and ALL Kids, Alabama's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). The Alabama Department of Public Health, in collaboration with the Alabama Medicaid Agency, will be leading the Perfecting Enrollment for Alabama's Kids (PEAK) project as a grantee of the *Maximizing Enrollment for Kids* program. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation will provide funding and support for the grant.

Gov. Bob Riley stated, "I am committed to increasing the enrollment of eligible children in both the Medicaid and ALL Kids programs. I have a keen interest in seeing that Alabama's children receive appropriate health coverage."

Program leaders say Alabama was selected because the state has demonstrated a strong commitment to increasing children's enrollment in public coverage programs, even in the face of difficult economic times.

"During these challenging times, we see this grant as an opportunity to think creatively to reach more uninsured children in Alabama," says Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer.

Under the direction of the National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP), which serves as the national program office for *Maximizing Enrollment for Kids*, Alabama hopes to increase enrollment of eligible children to further develop and enhance existing community systems and partnerships that assist families with enrollment and renewal processes. Alabama has been making steady progress in its effort to enroll all eligible children in Medicaid and CHIP through a variety of ongoing strategies. Examples include developing systems to streamline enrollment with enhanced community partners (such as the Children's Hospital in Birmingham) and implementing a web-based application with electronic signature.

According to the most recent government data, 8.7 million children are uninsured in the United States, with most of these children eligible for public health insurance, but not enrolled. In Alabama, 78,000 children are uninsured, and more than 65 percent are likely eligible for low-cost or free health insurance.

Currently, ALL Kids enrollment is over 70,000 and SOBRA Medicaid's enrollment is over 415,000. The Children's Defense Fund recently released a report titled "The State of America's Children 2008." The report states that Alabama did quite well in the number of children covered by health insurance, with just 6.6 percent of children uninsured in 2007. That is well below the national average of 11.3 percent.

Other states participating in the *Maximizing Enrollment for Kids* program are Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York, Utah, Virginia and Wisconsin.

For more information, please call the ALL Kids administrative offices at 1-334-206-5568 or toll free at 1-877-774-9521.