

The Children's Health Insurance Program is at risk – here's how you can help save it

In 1997, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) was created with bipartisan support to fill a significant gap in health coverage for uninsured working families. These are families who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but for whom private coverage remains out of reach. In 2009, the program was reauthorized by Congress with an important addition: a guaranteed pediatric dental benefit. Today, CHIP provides affordable, age-appropriate health coverage to more than 8 million children and 370,000 pregnant women. The benefit makes a huge difference to families: The percentage of children without medical and dental insurance has never been lower! But that could change.

Federal funding for CHIP runs out in September of this year. Federal and state governments share the costs of CHIP, with contributions from enrolled families. State legislatures must finalize their 2016 budgets soon, but unless Congress takes action, there will be no new federal funding to support CHIP after September 30, 2015.

Fortunately, bills have been introduced in both the House and Senate to extend CHIP's federal funding through 2019.

Governors from 41 states submitted letters to Congress in support of a federal funding extension for CHIP. (Letters from Indiana and Iowa are not yet accessible online.) This gives advocates an excellent opportunity to discuss the importance of CHIP with their Congressional delegations.

- Look for your governor's letter [here](#) (letters are saved in the numbered PDFs)
 - #1: *Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii*
 - #2: *Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts*
 - #3: *Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada*
 - #4: *New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania*
 - #5: *Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming*
- Your state's CHIP enrollment may be found [here](#) (June 13, 2014 report; Appendix 1-A-3)
- CHIP is a great deal for states; see data [here](#) (June 13, 2014 report; Appendix 1-A-4)

Key Messages

1. **Without CHIP, millions of children could lose health coverage.** Today, CHIP provides affordable, comprehensive health coverage to more than millions of children and pregnant women from working families. If funding for the program runs out, millions of children will be moved into marketplace coverage and could end up without dental coverage—or have to buy dental coverage that is much more expensive than under CHIP. A recent report by Wakely Consulting Group estimated that families' cost-sharing could increase by up to 10 times what

they pay out-of-pocket under CHIP. In addition, nearly 2 million of today's CHIP-covered children would be *ineligible* for subsidized coverage on the marketplaces as a result of the so-called "family glitch."

2. **Extending CHIP is a sound budgetary decision.** According to an analysis by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), much of the cost of a CHIP extension would be offset by reductions in other federal spending. MACPAC, an independent commission advising Congress, also reviewed the potential federal spending and supported a two-year extension of the program.
3. **Congress needs to extend funding now.** Unless Congress acts soon, there will be no new funding for CHIP after September 30, 2015. State legislatures, governors, and state agencies are already making decisions about transitioning families out of CHIP coverage. Any disruption to CHIP—even temporary— will hurt millions of families who rely on this coverage, increasing the number of uninsured children. Congress must act now to extend CHIP funding through 2019. This extension will give children uninterrupted, affordable coverage while new options are created in the marketplace.
4. **Dental benefits are especially vulnerable if CHIP ends.** Moving families into the state marketplaces could create significant problems because families seeking dental coverage there could be subject to additional premiums and cost-sharing in order to make sure their children have comprehensive dental benefits. And unlike CHIP, in most state marketplaces, there is no guarantee that children will receive dental coverage when they purchase a health plan.

For CHIP updates, send your contact information to info@cdhp.org.