



News Release

For Immediate Release:

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CHIP Appropriation Will Insure More Kids, Expand Benefits

(Salt Lake City, Utah) – Monday at 2:00 p.m., Governor Michael O. Leavitt will sign House Bill 72, allocating an additional \$1.5 million of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement to the Utah's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Beginning July 1, 2003, this funding will become available to enroll approximately 4,000 additional kids on CHIP and to allow fillings and other services to treat tooth decay to be restored.

This funding will bring CHIP's average annual enrollment from 24,000 to 28,000 children. "Having your child covered by health insurance offers families peace of mind," said Chad Westover, Director of CHIP and the Utah Department of Health's Office of Children's Insurance and Access Initiatives, "The Department is pleased to be able to offer CHIP to 4,000 more Utah families."

Representative Hogue sponsored House Bill 72. The child advocacy community has applauded his efforts to cover more kids and to restore dental benefits to CHIP.

"Providing health insurance to Utah children is a priority. I was pleased to sponsor this bill, and even more pleased that it passed both the House and Senate with almost no opposition," said Representative Hogue.

Beginning July 1, 2003, CHIP dental benefits will cover preventive services as well as restorative services such as fillings, crowns, and space maintainers. Many of these restorative benefits were previously limited due to budget constraints.

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CHIP receives four federal dollars for each state dollar. For Fiscal Year 2004, the state portion of CHIP's budget will be \$7 million. All state funding is from the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement.

CHIP is a state health insurance plan for children whose families qualify based on family size and income. For example, according to 2003 income guidelines, a family of four earning up to \$36,800 a year may qualify. Approximately 6.8 percent of Utah's children are without health insurance. Children under the age of 19 who are U.S. citizens or legal residents and who are not currently covered by health insurance may qualify. Eligible families may be required to pay premiums of up to \$25 every three months. Premiums and small co-pays make it possible to insure more children. CHIP enrollment is currently closed. Since 1998, CHIP has covered more than 61,000 Utah kids and today enrollment is at nearly 26,000 children.

The next CHIP Open Enrollment is expected to be held during back to school season in 2003. To find out when the next CHIP Open Enrollment will be held, watch and listen for TV, radio, and other announcements, call 1-877-KIDS-NOW (toll-free), or visit the CHIP website www.health.utah.gov/chip.

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