



News Release

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CHIP Van Goes on the Road Again

Children's Health Insurance Program open for all eligible children

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Van Tour rolls on now that new legislation is allowing open enrollment for all eligible children. House Bill 326 provides new funding that keeps enrollment open year-round. Since 2002, funding restraints meant families had to hope that their need for insurance (for example, because of an unexpected job loss) coincided with a CHIP open enrollment period.

The CHIP van first hit the road in August 2007, crisscrossing the state and visiting all 29 counties. CHIP workers attended 100 events and met with more than 3,000 people, ultimately accepting more than 330 applications while sending many more home with interested families. Current enrollment stands at nearly 32,000 kids, and will continue to accept as many eligible children as apply.

The van campaign was developed to provide a recognizable symbol of the state's commitment to covering as many uninsured children as possible and continues to travel the state today. Utah Department of Health Executive Director David Sundwall wants every family to know about CHIP, and credits the 2008 legislature for authorizing new funding to make that possible.

“We are grateful that the legislature saw the importance of this program for Utah families,” said Sundwall. “It gives parents peace of mind in knowing that their children are covered, so that they can direct their focus to other basic needs for their families.”

CHIP enrollment is following expectations of steady growth since the program opened for extended enrollment last July. Since 1998, nearly 127,000 Utah kids have been helped by the program. Three current enrollees are the children of Amanda Peterson.

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When Amanda's husband, Andy, graduated from college and got a job, they were discouraged to learn his company didn't offer health insurance. And like many Utah families, they couldn't afford to buy it on their own.

"We seemed to be right in the income bracket where we made too much to get Medicaid coverage, but too little to afford anything for ourselves. We felt like we would be stranded without anything," said Peterson.

After enrolling her children in CHIP, a grateful Peterson says, "I can't tell you how relieved I am to have insurance for my kids. It's so nice to know they can go to the doctor and the dentist. I don't have to worry about how I will pay because the premium and the co-pays are very reasonable. We need this program."

To receive CHIP benefits, children must meet age and income requirements. For example, a family of four earning up to \$42,400 a year may qualify. Children must be younger than 19, U.S. citizens or legal residents, and not currently covered by other insurance. Families can apply online, have an application mailed to them, or apply in person at the CHIP van or a local eligibility office. Once enrolled, families may be required to pay premiums of up to \$60 every three months. Premiums and co-pays for services make it possible for CHIP to insure even more children.

Learn more about the CHIP Van Tour by calling 1-877-KIDS-NOW, or visit www.health.utah.gov/chip for a detailed list of event locations, dates, and times.

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