

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services 600 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck ND 58505

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N.D. Awarded Performance Bonus for Gains in Child Health Coverage

BISMARCK, N.D. – Governor Jack Dalrymple today congratulated the North Dakota Department of Human Services on receiving a \$3.2 million performance bonus from the federal government for improving access and covering more low-income children through its Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance programs.

“Child health coverage programs provide an important safety net for uninsured low-income children,” Dalrymple said. “North Dakota is working hard to ensure that children get the health care they need and deserve, and this performance bonus recognizes the strides we are making to simplify these programs and help children in need.”

North Dakota has made beneficial policy changes over the past decade. These include providing continuous 12-month coverage once a child qualifies, basing eligibility for children on family income only (not assets), eliminating the need for in-person interviews with eligibility workers, and making it easier to apply and renew coverage.

According to department officials, “continuous eligibility” has provided the biggest benefit to qualifying children and their families. The department implemented that policy change in June 2008.

“Prior to continuous eligibility, which was championed by a number of North Dakota lawmakers, children had to requalify monthly,” said Medicaid Director Maggie Anderson. “If parents did not provide a monthly update to their county social service office or if family income fluctuated slightly such as from seasonal overtime, coverage could be disrupted.”

Anderson said the state has also simplified its application and renewal processes. There is one application for all child health coverage programs, and uninsured children are connected to the appropriate public program or the private Caring for Children program. Parents can even complete the application online if they choose, she said.

The governor and lawmakers have also supported funding for advertising and outreach to make more parents aware of child health coverage programs, Anderson said.

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In December 2011, about 42,533 North Dakota children participated in either Medicaid or the Healthy Steps Children's Health Insurance Program. In December 2010, child participants in the two programs numbered 42,096.

For information about child health coverage programs such as the Healthy Steps Children's Health Insurance Program, Medicaid, and the private Caring for Children program, parents of uninsured children can call 1-877-KIDS-NOW (877-543-7669). An informational brochure is also online at <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/info/pubs/docs/medicaid/child-health-coverage-brochure.pdf>.

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