

**NEWS RELEASE** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | Dec. 31, 2019

## **Qualifying children enrolled in ND's Children's Health Insurance Program will have access to more coverage benefits January 1**

BISMARCK, N.D. – About 2,000 qualifying North Dakota children enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) will transition to traditional Medicaid coverage and have access to more health and dental benefits beginning Jan. 1, 2020. This change will happen automatically, and families can expect a seamless transition with no gaps in coverage.

During the 2019 legislative session, lawmakers authorized the North Dakota Department of Human Services to simplify the delivery of services by transferring administration of CHIP from contracts with Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota and Delta Dental of Minnesota to traditional Medicaid coverage.

"One of our agency's priorities is to simplify how we deliver programs that benefit the people we serve while being good stewards of the taxpayers' dollars," said Caprice Knapp, director of the department's Medical Services Division. "This change simplifies coverage for qualifying families. No longer will some family members have traditional Medicaid coverage while children in the same household have CHIP coverage. Now, all family members will have Medicaid coverage."

Knapp said the change has other benefits to clients.

Qualifying children will now have access to a yearly screening and well-child checkup through North Dakota Medicaid's Health Tracks program. This program helps prevent and identify health problems before they become too complex and costly to treat. Other benefit changes include the elimination of copayments on covered services, and the removal of service limits on physical therapy, speech therapy and occupational therapy. In addition, there will be no dollar limit for Medicaid-covered dental services.

Taxpayers will also benefit from the change. Department officials estimate this Medicaid operational change will save \$6.1 million in total funds in the first 18-months after implementation.

"We understand that even though North Dakota reimburses Medicaid professional providers at or near Medicare rates, there might be some families who may need to find a new doctor or dentist because their current provider does not accept Medicaid. Even with the state's rural nature, in a 2019 survey of North Dakota Medicaid beneficiaries, 80.3 percent reported usually or always having access to care from their provider when they needed care. In reality, the more robust Medicaid coverage for qualifying children is a win-win for them," Knapp said.

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New Medicaid identification cards were mailed in mid-December to qualifying children who will transition from CHIP to traditional Medicaid coverage. These cards should be used starting January 1 for all medical, dental and vision services and to fill prescriptions.

Knapp said department staff have worked hard to make this a smooth transition for families. She added that multiple letters were mailed directly to affected families to make them aware of the upcoming change and that they needed to select a primary care provider before the end of the year.

The department has online resources available for families looking for providers enrolled in North Dakota Medicaid. A list of dental providers accepting North Dakota Medicaid is online at [www.insurekidsnow.gov](http://www.insurekidsnow.gov). A list of primary care providers that accept North Dakota Medicaid is online at [www.nd.gov/dhs/services/medicalserv/medicaid/cures-act.html](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/medicalserv/medicaid/cures-act.html). Families with questions can call North Dakota Medicaid toll-free at 800-755-2604, 711 (TTY) between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Central Time, Monday through Friday.

In October 2019, about 67,600 individuals qualified for traditional Medicaid coverage.

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