

Children's Health Insurance Program

The Texas Catholic Conference **supports** enrolling every eligible child in CHIP & Medicaid with 12 months continuous eligibility.

Access to affordable, quality healthcare is a fundamental right for all children residing in Texas. We support efforts to ensure that all children are given the opportunity for a healthy start in life. Scripture teaches that God has a special concern for the poor and vulnerable. The Church calls on all of us to embrace this preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, to embody it in our lives, and to work to have it shape public policies and priorities. A fundamental measure of our society is how we care for and stand with the poor and vulnerable. (*Texas Catholic Conference, Testimony on CHIP*).

A Texas Bishop Speaks:

"Our approach to health care is shaped by the fundamental principle: 'Every person has a right to adequate health care.' This right flows from the sanctity of human life and the dignity that belongs to all human persons, who are made in the image of God."



-Bishop Kevin Vann, Diocese of Fort Worth

Church Teaching

- ★ Even more than an expression of solidarity, it is a matter of justice to overcome the temptation to reduce public services for a short-term benefit against the long-term human cost. (*Intervention of the Holy See at the 2009 High Level Segment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, July 2009*)
- ★ Poverty remains the principal cause of childhood sickness. One billion two hundred thousand people live with less than a dollar a day. Even in the richest countries, one child in six lives under the poverty line... Two hundred and fifty million children under fifteen work, including some sixty million who do so in dangerous conditions while many children and adolescents are left to their own devices. (*Cardinal Lozano Barragan, Pastoral Care in the Treatment of Sick Children*)
- ★ [Medical activity] must always be the authentic good of the child, considered in his or her dignity as a human being with full rights. Children must, then, always be cared for with love, to help them face suffering and sickness, even before birth, in a way appropriate to their situation. (*Pope Benedict XVI, Twenty-third International Conference of the Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care*)
- ★ When there is a question of allocating scarce resources, the vulnerable and the poor have a compelling claim to first consideration. (*USCCB, A Framework for Health Care Reform*).

Resources

- ★ **USCCB Health Care Page** (www.usccb.org/healthcare)
- ★ **CHIP Texas Health and Human Services Commission** (www.chipmedicaid.org/)
- ★ **Texas Department of State Health Services** (www.dshs.state.tx.us)
- ★ **Texas Health and Human Services Commission** (www.hhsc.state.tx.us)

The Texas Catholic Conference (TCC) is the association of the 15 Roman Catholic dioceses of the State of Texas, and is the Official Public Policy Voice of the Catholic Bishops of Texas.

Andrew Rivas, Executive Director • Jennifer Carr Allmon, Associate Director • Margaret McGettrick, Education Director

Children's Health Insurance Program

Children's Medicaid and CHIP bring billions of federal matching dollars to Texas, dollars that not only support the direct provision of health care services, but also support and sustain local economies. Together these programs serve more than 2.8 million children of working parents. Without CHIP or children's Medicaid, most enrollees would lack coverage of important primary and preventive health care services they need to thrive physically, socially, and academically. Across-the-board reductions in these safety net programs would directly diminish the well-being of Texas families and the Texas economy.

In less than four years, Texas will begin to expand Medicaid to over 1 million additional enrollees, and private insurance to another 3 million Texans. Texas must invest resources now to build the provider network so that existing and future Medicaid enrollees and privately-insured Texans alike will be able to obtain the health care services they expect.

The Roman Catholic Bishops of Texas support:

- Strategic initiatives and investments that will improve the quality and increase cost effectiveness for Medicaid and CHIP.
- Improvement and modernization of the Medicaid and CHIP eligibility system, including specific efforts to eliminate delays, backlogs, and erroneous denials that stand between eligible Texas children and the health care they need. Staffing levels, computer processes, and procedures must be designed to meet or exceed federal processing timeliness standards.
- Investments to expand Texas' health care workforce. Compared to other states, Texas already has too few physicians, nurses, and other health care professionals to meet the needs of the population. Given the time it takes to train new doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, and others in the health care workforce, Texas must continue to work hard to retain and recruit more health care professionals so that there will be a sufficient number of providers to meet the needs of the Texas' burgeoning population.

Overview of the Children's Health Insurance Program

The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) is a joint state-federal program that provides medical coverage to eligible children up to age 19, who are not already insured. The federal government pays approximately 72% of CHIP medical care expenditures.ⁱ CHIP and Children's Medicaid together serve more than 2 million children of working parents. Without CHIP or Children's Medicaid, most enrollees would lack coverage of important primary and preventive health care services they need to thrive physically, socially, and academically.

Currently Texas has three children's health insurance programs: Children's Medicaid, Traditional CHIP, and the CHIP Perinatal Program. Children's Medicaid covers over 1.8 million children in families whose income is at or below the federal poverty level, plus preschool children and infants above the poverty line. Traditional CHIP is available for children in families that earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, but too little to afford private insurance. Traditional CHIP covered over 450,000 children in mid-2008. Qualifying families may earn up to 200% of the federal poverty level.

CHIP Serves:ⁱ

- Uninsured children under age 19
- CHIP Perinatal serves unborn children meeting eligibility requirements
- Gross income up to 200% FPL
- Families with income above 150% FPL must meet assets criteria: (1) Assets below \$10,000 (2) One vehicle is exempt up to \$18,000; (3) Additional vehicles are exempt up to \$7,500
- U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents
- Those who are not eligible for Medicaid

The citizenship or immigration status of the parents does not affect the children's eligibility and is not reported on the application form.ⁱⁱ

(Last updated August 28, 2010, 82nd Legislative Session)

ⁱ Hawkins, A., and Heiligenstein, A. (Feb., 2007). Presentation to House Committee on Human Services. October 24, 2007. www.hhsc.state.tx.us/news/presentations/021507_HouseHumanServicesCommittee.pdf.

ⁱⁱ "Children's Medicaid." Texas Health and Human Services Commission. <www.chipmedicaid.org>.