

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

CHILDREN

**VICE PRESIDENT GORE UNVEILS NEW EFFORTS TO TARGET AND ENROLL
UNINSURED CHILDREN, ANNOUNCES THREE STATE CHILDREN'S HEALTH
INSURANCE PROGRAM APPROVALS AND HIGHLIGHTS THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES
RURAL COMMUNITIES FACE IN INSURING CHILDREN**

September 1, 1998

Today, the Vice President joins the Children's Health Fund in kicking off a new public/private effort to reach out and enroll uninsured children across the nation. At this event, the Vice President hosted the National Child Health Caravan on its multi-state tour to promote children's outreach; unveiled major new children's health outreach and enrollment efforts from multiple departments within the Federal government; announced three state children's health insurance program (CHIP) approvals; and highlighted the special challenges that rural states face in targeting and covering uninsured children.

There are over four million children who are currently eligible but not enrolled in Medicaid and there could be hundreds of thousands more children eligible and not signed up as states implement CHIP. Recent studies have shown that uninsured children are more likely to be sick as newborns; less likely to be immunized; and less likely to receive treatment for recurring illnesses, like ear infections or asthma. The Vice President also highlighted the particular challenges in enrolling children in rural areas, where 2.5 million of the nation's uninsured children live. Today, the Vice President:

Highlighted National Child Health Caravan. The Vice President hosted the National Child Health Caravan, on a multi-state journey to reach out to and enroll uninsured children and to call attention to the needs of medically underserved children. The Caravan will deliver new mobile units that provide a range of health services for children in medically underserved areas.

Announced New Initiatives to Identify and Enroll Uninsured Children. In response to the public-private outreach initiative the President and First Lady announced earlier this year, pharmacies, grocery stores, and other private companies are launching efforts to reach out to families with uninsured children. In June, at the Vice President's Family Conference, the President signed an Executive Memorandum directing eight Federal agencies to help sign up millions of uninsured children. Today, the Vice President announced new steps that agencies are taking in response to that directive. They will:

- **Launch a new campaign to encourage states to partner with school lunch programs that serve 15 million children.** Today, the Secretary of Agriculture is launching a campaign to encourage states to use the 94,000 school lunch programs to sign up uninsured children. The Department will distribute several model free and reduced price lunch application forms that states and schools may use to link families to state health insurance programs. About 15 million children, many of whom are uninsured, receive free or reduced-price lunches.
- **Kick off efforts to educate the 6 million families in low-income housing programs about health insurance.** About 6 million low-income households receive assistance through public housing or multi-family properties. Later this week, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development will send information about the new CHIP program and how to identify and enroll families eligible for CHIP or Medicaid to: 3,400 Public Housing Authorities; 25,000 owners and managers of multi-family properties; 72 directors of the Urban Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities; Grantees providing assistance to homeless families; beneficiaries of Native American Mortgage Loan Program; and parents and community groups working on lead

hazards.

- **Utilize over 150,000 Treasury employees who work with the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and other low-income programs to educate families about CHIP and Medicaid.**

Today, the Secretary of Treasury is sending 158,000 employees a memorandum encouraging their participation in efforts to target and enroll children in CHIP and Medicaid. These employees encounter low-income families, many of whom have uninsured children, in a number of ways. About 15 million families receive EITC.

Announced the Approval of Three New States Children's Health Insurance Programs and That Nearly Two-Thirds of States Have Now Been Approved. The Vice President announced that today the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services approved three new states -- Delaware, Iowa, and Kansas -- for CHIP. All of these states have disproportionate numbers of uninsured children in rural areas. These state programs alone will provide health care coverage for tens of thousands of uninsured children. With these new approvals, 33 new states and Puerto Rico will have approved plans that expect to cover over 2 million children when fully implemented.

- **Delaware:** The Delaware Healthy Children Program will cover children with family income up to 200 percent of poverty.
- **Iowa:** The "Healthy And Well Kids in Iowa" program (HAWK-I) expands Medicaid to all children with family income belows 133 percent of poverty.
- **Kansas:** The HealthWave program will ensure that all children with family incomes below 200 percent of poverty are eligible for coverage.

Highlighted the Importance of Medicaid and CHIP Outreach for Children in Rural Areas. The Vice President praised the Children's Health Fund for its effort to reach children in underserved areas. In particular, he highlighted the need to improve efforts to reach out to children in rural areas who have difficulties accessing health care coverage and services. The Vice President:

- **Underscored that about 2.5 million uninsured children in America live in rural areas.** Children in rural areas have particularly difficult time accessing health care coverage: their families tend to work in small businesses and agriculture jobs, that usually do not offer health care coverage, and it is harder for rural families to apply for health insurance programs in person.
- **Praised State and Federal governments efforts to reach out to uninsured children.** Recognizing the particular challenges for children in rural communities, states that have two-thirds of these rural uninsured children have already attempted to target many of these children through already approved CHIP plans. These states plans include outreach initiatives that are targeted to rural areas, such as enlisting community organizations that come into direct contact with parents of uninsured children. In addition, in response to the President's directive, the HHS Office of Rural Health Policy has already sent materials to grantees and many state rural health offices informing them about how best to target and enroll uninsured children.

Announced Over \$1.6 million, to Renew Successful Rural Health Projects in Underserved Communities.

The Vice President announced that this month that HHS will renew projects that reach out to children in underserved rural areas. These grants, which total over \$1.6 million include:

- A project to improve health services and health education to nearly 30,000 children in an isolated five county area in northern Idaho.
- A mobile medical clinic that rotates between four elementary schools in Marshalltown Iowa. The project is working to create a health status "report card" for each student designed to track and improve their health status, and a comprehensive primary care and prevention program that serves over 1,000 children.
- A project in Nebraska that provides in-home preventive services for children under five.
- A North Carolina project to reduce infant mortality, increase childhood immunization, reduce teen pregnancy, and increase awareness of child abuse and neglect through four Student Health Centers.

Urged Congress to pass Rural Outreach Initiative in the President's FY 1999 Budget. This initiative would provide a total of \$2 million granted to up to ten rural communities. These communities will use the money to train local citizens to provide outreach services to residents in hard-to-reach populations bringing them into the health care system for primary care, preventive services, and acute care.