



NEWS RELEASE

GOVERNOR'S COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

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BREDESEN ANNOUNCES COVERKIDS TO RESUME ENROLLMENT MARCH 1

NASHVILLE - Governor Phil Bredesen today announced that CoverKids, Tennessee's program for uninsured children, will reopen enrollment to new members on March 1, 2010. Enrollment in CoverKids was suspended late last year when membership reached the maximum that could be supported by the current budget.

Bredesen's proposed budget for FY 2010-2011 includes an additional \$13.1 million in recurring state dollars to continue the CoverKids program next fiscal year, which would support increased program enrollment. Reopening enrollment on March 1, however, means children will have access to this coverage four months earlier.

"For three years, children across Tennessee have benefited from the quality coverage provided through CoverKids," Bredesen said in a speech to members of the Tennessee Press Association. "In light of the state's budget situation, we had to make a tough decision to suspend enrollment last year. Fortunately, we've been able to dig deep and find additional funding to keep this option available to families in need."

In addition to the new state appropriation, \$41.5 million in federal funds will come to Tennessee as a result of the state's increased contribution. Combined, this budget increase will allow for continued growth in CoverKids' membership.

When CoverKids originally opened, officials estimated somewhere between 40,000 and 45,000 children in the state would qualify for the program. The program's capped enrollment of 45,000 indicates the number of CoverKids-eligible children has increased, which is likely a result of the national economic downturn.

"CoverKids plays an important role in serving the needs of Tennessee's uninsured children," Bredesen said. "While the number of eligible children who have yet to enroll is relatively low, we hope to serve as many of them as possible through this increased funding."

Looking forward, program administrators believe as many as 5,000 more children in Tennessee qualify for coverage through CoverKids.

In Tennessee, TennCare remains the primary provider of insurance for low-income uninsured children. TennCare currently has more than 750,000 children on its rolls.

As part of the State Children's Health Insurance Program, CoverKids picks up where TennCare eligibility ends and provides comprehensive health and dental coverage to children in families who cannot otherwise afford or access private health insurance.

(MORE)

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Tennessee families earning less than 250 percent of the federal poverty level, which is \$55,125 per year for a family of four, qualify for CoverKids and pay no monthly premium for the plan. Income-based co-pays are required for most services, though preventive care, including well-child visits, teeth cleanings and vision screenings are fully covered.

CoverKids is a program of Cover Tennessee, Bredesen's initiative to address the health care needs of Tennessee's uninsured. Cover Tennessee offers three other programs including CoverTN, a limited benefit health plan for the working uninsured; AccessTN, which offers comprehensive health insurance for those who are uninsurable due to pre-existing medical conditions; and CoverRx, which provides access to affordable prescriptions for Tennesseans who lack pharmacy benefits.

For more information about any of the Cover Tennessee programs, visit www.CoverTN.gov or call 1-866-COVERTN.

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