



SUCCESSFUL KIDS: How Can 89,000 Children Lose Health Insurance in a State With Universal Coverage?

There is a growing concern over children's health care in Pennsylvania. Late last summer, Department of Public Welfare (DPW) officials began sending out hundreds of thousands of renewal notices to Pennsylvania families receiving Medicaid, allowing families 10 days to provide documentation to keep children enrolled in Medicaid. If DPW did not receive and process all requested paperwork within this 10-day deadline, the child was dropped from Medicaid, even if the deadline was missed due to bureaucratic backlogs in processing paperwork.

This has resulted in nearly **89,000 fewer children enrolled** in Medicaid since August (1,161,135 in August versus 1,072,181 in January), according to DPW's own records. This is a significant drop in a very short time, and it raises serious concern about what is happening to these children.

Many of these children have severe disabilities. Children's advocates, health care providers and many of the families themselves say a number of these children were removed from Medicaid rolls despite their families submitting the requested paperwork on time. DPW caseworkers, unable to keep up with the influx of paperwork, simply couldn't process renewal applications quickly enough.

Meet Susan, a mother from southeastern Pennsylvania whose son was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and has other significant behavioral health care needs. Susan relies on Medicaid to provide the necessary treatment for her child. When she was asked to provide Medicaid renewal information, she gave DPW all requested documentation on Sept. 17, 2011, and received a receipt. Despite that, she learned her child's Medicaid was terminated last Oct. 12. The reason cited: failure to provide required information.

As part of the commonwealth's longstanding efforts to provide universal health care coverage for children, any Pennsylvania child whose family is no longer deemed income eligible for Medicaid coverage is referred to CHIP. Yet as the number of children enrolled in Medicaid plummeted, there was no corresponding increase in CHIP enrollment, which has remained steady during that same time. **This disparity in enrollment numbers indicates tens of thousands of Pennsylvania children who had health insurance just a few months ago now lack any health care coverage.**

In a state with universal coverage, it is a troubling sign when children who had been eligible for Medicaid – and whose families are familiar with the Medicaid application and renewal process - are abruptly terminated from the health care coverage they need without a satisfactory explanation.