



SUCCESSFUL KIDS: We Can't Let Children In Need Lose Medicaid Coverage

Pennsylvania has a strong history of helping our kids have insurance coverage. From the inception of CHIP nearly 20 years ago to the Cover All Kids expansion in 2006, state leaders from both political parties have recognized that children with health care coverage do better in school and are more likely to grow up to be healthy, productive citizens. That commitment is in jeopardy. In just the past two months, tens of thousands of Pennsylvania children have lost their Medicaid coverage. Many of these children have severe disabilities, and rely on the services provided by Medicaid to go to school and get by day-to-day.

Why are children losing Medicaid coverage? In recent months, Department of Public Welfare officials have sent out hundreds of thousands of renewal notices to families receiving Medicaid, giving families just 10 days (which includes mail days) to respond. If DPW didn't receive and process the response within this deadline, the family was dropped from Medicaid. Many families indicated they returned the forms on time, and have receipts to prove it, but their children were still dropped.

This already has resulted in more than 30,000 children losing Medicaid coverage. How many more could be facing the same fate? As *The Philadelphia Inquirer* noted in a recent editorial, "It's just wrong to risk hurting deserving youngsters through a single-minded focus on the bottom line." We agree. Our children deserve better than a bureaucratic process that puts reducing Medicaid rolls ahead of helping children receive needed medical care.

Meet Alex, a 5-year-old in his second year of treatment for leukemia. Medicaid helps cover what insurance from his mother's job doesn't. Alex's mom filled out DPW's paperwork to renew Medicaid coverage and returned it. Hearing nothing, she called DPW multiple times and was told to fill out the paperwork a second time, which she did. Nevertheless, she received notice that her son's Medicaid benefits were being stopped due to failure to file necessary paperwork.

In a similar case, the mother of a Medicaid-eligible boy with severe disabilities completed her son's Medicaid renewal online and - to ensure DPW had all the necessary documents - faxed the documents three times, each time receiving a confirmation of receipt. Still, she received notice that her son's coverage would be dropped.

We can do better for our kids. Let's finish what we started and make sure *all* children have access to health insurance. We *can* reach the finish line!