

**Carolina Cares for Children**

All children in North Carolina should have health care coverage. It is the right thing to do and it is one of the best investments we can make for our state. Children with health care coverage are more likely to get needed preventive care and have health problems detected and treated earlier in life. Preventable and treatable adolescent health conditions such as obesity become more serious and expensive conditions such as diabetes later in life. Children without health care coverage are sick more often and miss more school. North Carolina has a significant racial health disparity – according to US Census data, African-American children are 34% more likely to be uninsured than white children. Covering all children is an important step in eliminating this health disparity and providing every child with a healthy start in life.

Despite the obvious benefits of health care coverage for all children, there are approximately 250,000 children in North Carolina who currently lack health care coverage. Many of them – about 175,000 – are already eligible for Medicaid and Health Choice yet are not enrolled. Another 38,000 come from working families earning between 200% and 300% of the federal poverty guidelines. These families are struggling to make ends meet and simply cannot afford coverage. The remaining uninsured are in families with incomes above three times the federal poverty guidelines, but have not purchased health insurance for their children. The Carolina Cares for Children initiative will:

- **Establish a standard of universal coverage for children.** Every child in North Carolina will have access to affordable health care coverage.
  - **Enroll all children eligible for Medicaid and Health Choice.** To achieve this goal, we will offer financial incentives to hospitals, schools, and community health centers to enroll children in the appropriate health plan.
  - **Enlist parents to enroll children.** Parents will have new responsibilities under the Carolina Cares for Children initiative. Parents will have to provide their children’s health care policy number on their state tax return.
  - **Enhance public coverage options.** Full public coverage will be available to children in families up to 250% of federal poverty guidelines. Subsidized coverage on a sliding scale, similar to the current Kids’ Care initiative, will be offered to children in families from 250% to 300% of federal poverty guidelines.
  - **Ease the enrollment process.** Enrolling children in health plans is all-too-often a frustrating and complex process. Research shows that states with simplified enrollment processes enroll more children.

Federal Poverty Guidelines: Family of 4	
100%	\$20,650
200%	\$41,300
300%	\$61,950