



Texas CHIP Coalition Principles for Children's Health Care in the 82nd Texas Legislature

Children's Medicaid and CHIP serve more than 2.8 million Texas children. Without these programs, many children would lack coverage of important preventive, primary and specialty health care services that they need to grow up as healthy as possible. We believe that healthy children can be better students and that better students will grow up to have more productive lives.

Medicaid and CHIP bring billions of federal matching dollars to Texas that support the direct provision of health care services and help to sustain local economies. Across-the-board reductions in these safety net programs would directly diminish the well-being of Texas families and the Texas economy.

The CHIP Coalition's goal is for every eligible child in Texas to be enrolled in good, high quality health care coverage. The Coalition supports strategic initiatives and investments that will improve the quality and the effectiveness of Medicaid and CHIP.

Improve and Modernize the Medicaid and CHIP Eligibility System

Over the past year, HHSC has made great strides in processing Medicaid and CHIP applications promptly and correctly. To maintain that momentum, the CHIP Coalition supports investments in the Medicaid and CHIP eligibility system that will ensure Texas can consistently meet or exceed all federal eligibility processing standards, and minimize delays and erroneous denials. In preparation for Medicaid expansion in 2014, Texas must invest sufficient staff and financial resources to expand and modernize the eligibility system so that it can meet the needs of current and future enrollees.

Protect Texas' Critical Public Health Safety Net and Infrastructure

The CHIP Coalition supports maintaining a strong public health safety net, including community-based mental health services, comprehensive services for children with special health care needs, and preventive health services for children and women of

child-bearing age. Reducing funding for safety net programs will be detrimental to the overall health of children and families and ultimately will be more costly to the state.

Build an Effective Medicaid and CHIP Delivery System

The Coalition opposes cuts to Medicaid and CHIP provider payments or to covered benefits. Cutting Medicaid payment rates and services is penny wise and pound foolish. In many areas of the state, families struggle to find physicians, dentists and other providers who will see Medicaid or CHIP patients. Cuts in payments, even nominal ones, will result in more providers limiting or dropping participation in these programs, resulting in more patients seeking routine care in emergency rooms or being hospitalized for preventable conditions.

Texas must invest resources now to build the provider capacity so that existing and future Medicaid enrollees and privately-insured Texans alike will be able to obtain the health care services they need. The CHIP Coalition supports investments to expand Texas' health care workforce. Compared to other states, Texas has too few physicians, nurses, and other health care professionals to meet the needs of our growing population. Given the time it takes to train new doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, and others in the health care workforce, Texas must expand its efforts to train and recruit more health care professionals.

Reduce Medicaid Costs by Supporting Evidence-Based Practices that Improve Quality of Care for Mothers and Newborns

The Coalition supports policies and programs to reduce pre-term births; to support healthy birth spacing; to improve maternal access to smoking cessation and substance abuse services; to broaden adoption of innovative programs and practices that improve the effectiveness of prenatal care; and to support breast feeding, all of which will improve health outcomes and reduce future taxpayer costs.

Use New Revenue Sources and the Rainy Day Fund to Fill the Budget Gap instead of Slashing Health Care Programs for Children and other Vulnerable Texans.

The Coalition supports using existing and new sources of revenue to ensure all eligible Texas children receive the quality health care they need. All states are experiencing budget stresses in the current recession. Before cutting Medicaid or CHIP benefits, provider payment rates, or other vital public health and preventive health services, the state must first utilize existing state resources, including the Rainy Day Fund, and look to increasing resources, particularly by discouraging unhealthy behaviors through increased tobacco and alcohol taxes and taxes on sugary beverages.