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CoverKids to Suspend New Applicant Enrollment Nov. 30

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NASHVILLE – CoverKids program officials today announced the program will stop accepting new enrollment applications after Nov. 30, 2009, as the program for uninsured children is expected to reach its budgeted capacity.

“When we opened CoverKids in 2007, we said we would always operate within our financial means and manage enrollment accordingly,” said Bob Duncan, who oversees CoverKids as director of the Governor’s Office of Children’s Care Coordination. “We’ve come to a point where our budget fully supports current membership, which requires us to suspend the application process.”

CoverKids has nearly 42,000 children on its rolls, all of whom will remain enrolled in the program and will not be affected by the change, providing they continue to meet eligibility requirements.

CoverKids is a federally and state funded health plan through the State Children’s Health Insurance program, which provides comprehensive health and dental coverage to children in families who do not qualify for Medicaid, but cannot afford private health insurance.

“The state’s revenue shortfall has impacted all areas of government. CoverKids received no increase in its appropriation for this fiscal year, which requires even more responsible management, especially when it comes to enrollment,” Duncan said. “The good news is that current members are not impacted by today’s announcement.”

Current members and those who have already been approved for coverage will receive notification confirming current enrollment status. The program will continue to accept new applications through Nov. 30, 2009.

While no date is set for enrollment to reopen, Duncan did say there will be a point in the future where the natural decrease in membership due to children aging off or finding other coverage will allow for new applicants.

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, Governor Phil 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 offers comprehensive health insurance for those who are uninsurable due to pre-existing medical conditions and CoverRx 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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