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Georgetown Researchers Begin Evaluating Florida's Medicaid Changes *Too Early to Claim Success, Evaluators Say*

WASHINGTON---Georgetown University Health Policy Institute researchers Joan Alker and Jack Hoadley released the first in a series of issue briefs evaluating the implementation of Florida's experimental Medicaid waiver program. Funded primarily by the Jessie Ball DuPont Fund, the evaluation is the only comprehensive examination of the Medicaid pilot program that is funded independently of the state or federal government.

With the first wave of enrollment effective Sept. 1, the Florida Medicaid waiver will affect 207,077 current Medicaid beneficiaries in the two counties where the pilots are first being implemented. Children are the single largest group that will be required to participate in Florida's Medicaid experiment, the Georgetown Health Policy Institute researchers **said in issue brief (#1), "*Medicaid Changes: What Will They Mean for Broward and Duval counties, and beyond?*"**

"The Florida Medicaid waiver reflects a fundamental shift in thinking about how the Medicaid program should work – shifting critical decisions about vulnerable people's access to medical services from government to private insurance companies, and limiting the amount of funding available for individuals' health care," said Joan Alker, senior researcher at the Center for Children and Families at the Georgetown University Health Policy Institute and co-author of the issue brief.

The Medicaid changes underway in Florida are being viewed by some as a model for state and national Medicaid reforms. Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich has promoted Florida as being "the state furthest out front in transforming Medicaid to a 21st Century Responsible Citizen Medicaid System." But such claims are premature since the Florida reforms are still in their infancy.

"It is still too early to determine how beneficiaries will fare under the changes and the new limits on benefits and services, although Florida's Medicaid reform effort is already being touted as a model," according to Jack Hoadley, co-author of the issue brief and a professor at Georgetown University Health Policy Institute

The evaluation project is supported by the Jessie Ball DuPont Fund, The Community Foundation in Jacksonville, and the United Way of Northeast Florida.

The issue brief, *Medicaid Changes: What will they mean for Broward and Duval counties, and beyond?*, is available online at <http://hpi.georgetown.edu/floridamedicaid>.