

# The Palm Beach Post

[Print this page](#)[Close](#)

## Researchers warn proposed changes to Florida's Medicaid could drop 600,000 poor children from rolls

By **SONJA ISGER**

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Updated: 12:34 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2011

Posted: 10:51 a.m. Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2011

Proposed changes to the state's Medicaid program that would have parents pay a monthly \$10 premium per person for coverage threatens to undo all the strides Florida has made in getting health care to the state's poorest children, researchers warned Wednesday.

The premium, combined with several other changes lawmakers have asked for, could lead to 800,000 parents and children leaving the program because they couldn't afford it, concluded a team from the Health Policy Institute at Georgetown University.

About 82 percent of those left without medical coverage would be children, 98 percent of whom live below federal poverty levels, the report concluded.

The news is a punch in the gut from the very researchers who only last week praised Florida's efforts to date.

The praise: Even as the ranks of children in poverty continue to swell, the number of children who are going without health insurance is shrinking - and, contrary to typecast, Florida is at the head of that trend.

"Florida has traditionally had a high number of uninsured kids and a very high rate of uninsured, and they don't rank well in terms of getting kids enrolled who are eligible. So the fact that it did so well was a wonderful turnaround in their past performance," said Joan Alker, a co-author of the Georgetown University study that revealed the state's leadership last week.

That's not to say all is rosy in the Sunshine State.

While Florida managed to cut the number of uninsured children by 160,000 between 2009 and 2010, it still has nearly 507,000 children who remain uninsured.

Researchers argued Wednesday that the suggested premium would be a step in the wrong direction.

"This proposal would turn back the clock on all that progress and would have a devastating impact on the growing number of Florida children living in poverty," said Alker, who with Jack Hoadley has studied Florida's Medicaid program since 2004. The reports were commissioned and paid for by the Jessie Ball duPont Fund and the Winter Park Health Foundation.

"No other state has sought such expansive premiums - especially for children - at such low income levels," the researchers wrote.

The proposed premium would still have to be approved by the federal government before imposed.

---

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/researchers-warn-proposed-changes-to-floridas-medicaid-could-2018012.html>

[Print this page](#)[Close](#)