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Expanding the State Children's Health Insurance Program Helps Low-Income, Uninsured Children the Most

WASHINGTON - The Center for Children and Families has released new data on the enrollment experiences of four states that expanded eligibility for their State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) in a fact sheet entitled, [Putting Out the Welcome Mat: Implications of Coverage Expansions for Already-Eligible Children](#).

The new data indicate that half to two-thirds or more of the children who gained health insurance as a result of these states' expansions were already eligible under pre-expansion rules. "At a time when the economic news for working families continues to get worse, it is encouraging to see that state-led efforts to expand coverage for children are working, especially for those facing the greatest hardship," said Cindy Mann, Executive Director of the Center for Children and Families.

During a week when Congressional leaders decided not to try again to overcome President Bush's veto of SCHIP reauthorization legislation, the findings provide fresh insights into the much-debated question of whether expanding SCHIP would harm efforts to enroll the lowest-income uninsured children in America.

"The evidence is now in," said Ms. Mann, "we don't have to pick between covering our poorest kids versus those in more-moderate income families. When states expand eligibility, it not only offers affordable coverage options to a new group of children, but significantly improves efforts to reach the lowest-income uninsured children who already are eligible for Medicaid and SCHIP."

After President Bush twice vetoed legislation to reauthorize the SCHIP program in 2007, Congress extended the program through March 31, 2009.

"We have a popular, remarkably successful program in SCHIP that has won the support of policymakers on both sides of the aisle and Governors across the country," said Ms. Mann. "These and other states are covering children despite their fiscal challenges and uncertainty about the future of SCHIP," said Ms. Mann. "It is imperative that our leaders in Washington help, not hurt, state efforts to cover uninsured children by taking quick, strong action to renew and strengthen the federal government's commitment to SCHIP in early 2009," she concluded.

CCF is an independent, nonpartisan research and policy center based at Georgetown University's Health Policy Institute whose mission is to expand and improve health coverage for America's children and families. For more information visit our Web site, email us or call (202) 687-0880.