



Children's Defense Fund

**Children's Defense Fund, HISD, Houston Apartment Association,
McDonald's, Fiesta & Local Hospitals Launch Campaign to Enroll Every
Eligible Houston Child in Medicaid and CHIP**

Houston, Texas – Today the Children's Defense Fund of Texas, local hospitals and business leaders announced the 100% Campaign to enroll all eligible Houston children in low-cost health coverage through the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Children's Medicaid. The year-long enrollment campaign will inform parents about new policy changes approved by the Texas Legislature that will simplify the CHIP enrollment process.

Effective September 1, 2007, most children on CHIP will have coverage for 12 full months instead of having to reapply twice a year, uninsured children will no longer have to wait for 90 days to receive care and child expenses will be taken into account when determining income. These changes are expected to restore CHIP enrollment to 127,000 Texas children by 2009. Texas has the highest rate of uninsured children in the nation, with one in five – 1.4 million – lacking coverage. Half of Texas' uninsured children are eligible for but not enrolled in CHIP or Medicaid.

Barbara Best, Texas Executive Director of the Children's Defense Fund, encouraged parents to enroll the children in the "new and improved CHIP." "The Texas Legislature made important progress in simplifying the CHIP application process," Best said. "We hope that parents will take advantage of this successful program so that Texas children get the healthcare they need to grow into productive workers and responsible citizens."

A vast array of Houston organizations have joined forces to sign children up for health coverage. The **Houston Independent School District** is joining **Memorial Hermann Healthcare System, St. Luke's Episcopal Health Charities** and **Texas Children's Health Plan/Texas Children's Hospital/Texas Children's Pediatric Associates** to launch the 100% Campaign in Houston schools. Houston hospitals are funding outreach workers in each HISD region who will identify every uninsured child and link them with health coverage. The goal of the project is to enroll every eligible HISD student in health insurance and to reduce emergency room costs for local hospitals and taxpayers.

"The 100% Campaign will improve the health of HISD students," said HISD Superintendent Dr. Abelardo Saavedra. "That will improve learning and achievement because fewer kids will be missing school due to illness or lack of health care. That connection is important to us."

The **Houston Apartment Association (HAA)** is a new partner of the Children's Defense Fund and will educate apartment managers across the city about the CHIP program. The managers will then be able to provide vital information to their residents about how to apply for the insurance. "Through our organization, we can reach hundreds of families that will benefit from the CHIP program," said **HAA President Suan Tinsley**. "The vast majority of children who need this program live in rental housing. CHIP will help parents provide much-needed health care to their children and give them peace of mind without having to sacrifice other basic necessities. We are proud to be a partner in this important initiative."

Through the generous support of the **Baylor Methodist Community Health Fund**, the Children's Defense Fund of Texas and the **Gulf Coast CHIP Coalition** are also launching city-wide outreach events with **McDonald's Restaurants, Fiesta Supermarkets and Clear Channel Outdoor**.

- **On Saturday, August 25th, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., the McDonald's Operator Association of Greater Houston will host a city-wide enrollment drive at ten Houston area restaurants.** McDonald's has also printed 843,000 CHIP trayliners and bagstuffers that will be distributed in more than 280 Houston area restaurants.
- **On Saturday, September 8th, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Fiesta Mart, Inc. will hold the 16th city-wide enrollment drive at 15 Fiesta Supermarkets.** Fifteen previous drives have assisted more than 20,000 Houston children in applying for CHIP and Medicaid. Fiesta Mart, Inc. will be sending out two million mailers in August to promote the September 8 drive, distributing 17,000 postcards to customers at targeted stores and providing CHIP bagstuffers at checkout counters.
- **Clear Channel Outdoor, Cover The Uninsured – Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Baylor Methodist Community Health Fund and McDonald's Operator Association of Greater Houston** have also donated **55 billboards promoting CHIP/Medicaid** that will be posted in neighborhoods with high numbers of uninsured children.
- The **Houston Dynamo** is also including CHIP public service announcements and banners at their home soccer games.

To apply for coverage at local enrollment events, parents need to bring copies of proof of household income: one recent pay stub, last year's W-2 tax form OR a letter from the employer verifying cash income. Parents should also bring copies of children's birth certificates and children's social security numbers.

The Children's Health Insurance Program provides low-cost health coverage to uninsured children in families that earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but cannot afford private coverage. A family of four can earn up to 200% of the federal poverty level - \$41,300 a year for a family of four in 2007 – and qualify. Families will pay no more than \$50 a year to insure all their children. CHIP covers regular check-ups and immunizations, hospitalization, surgery, x-rays, prescription drugs, dental, vision and mental health services.

To apply for CHIP or Medicaid, please call toll-free 1-877-KIDS-NOW or download an application from the internet at www.chipmedicaid.org.

The mission of the **Children's Defense Fund** is to Leave No Child Behind and to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. Children's Defense Fund of Texas offices in Houston, Austin and the Rio Grande Valley work to ensure every child a *Healthy Start* in life and access to affordable health coverage.