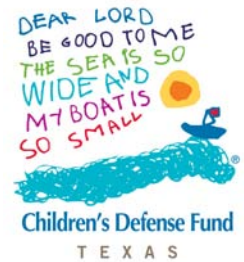


Children's Defense Fund–Texas Policy Priorities

For the 2011 Legislative Session



Maintain the State's Medicaid and CHIP Eligibility Processing System

Over the past year, Texas HHSC has made great strides in processing Medicaid and CHIP applications promptly and correctly. To maintain that momentum, CDF-TX supports investments in the Medicaid and CHIP eligibility system that will ensure Texas can consistently meet or exceed all federal eligibility processing standards, and minimize delays and erroneous denials. In preparation for Medicaid expansion in 2014, Texas must invest sufficient staff and financial resources to expand and modernize the eligibility system so that it can meet the needs of current and future enrollees.

Protect Texas' Critical Public Health Safety-Net and Infrastructure

CDF-TX supports maintaining a strong public health safety-net, including community-based mental health services, comprehensive services for children with special health care needs, and preventive health services for children and women of child-bearing age. Reducing funding for safety-net programs will be detrimental to the overall health of children and families, and ultimately more costly to the state.

Maintain an Effective Medicaid and CHIP Delivery System

CDF-TX opposes cuts to Medicaid and CHIP provider payments or to covered benefits. Cuts in payments, even nominal ones, will result in more providers limiting or dropping participation in these programs, resulting in more patients seeking routine care in emergency rooms or being hospitalized for preventable conditions. Texas must invest adequate resources now to build provider capacity so that existing and future Medicaid enrollees, and privately-insured Texans alike, will be able to obtain the health care services they need.

Use New Revenue Sources and the Rainy Day Fund to Fill the Budget Gap instead of Cutting Health Care Programs for Children and other Vulnerable Texans

CDF-TX supports using existing and new sources of revenue to ensure all eligible Texas children receive the quality health care they need. All states are experiencing budget stresses in the current recession. Before cutting Medicaid or CHIP benefits, provider payment rates, or other vital public health and preventive health services, the state must first utilize existing state resources, including the Rainy Day Fund, and look to increasing revenues, particularly by discouraging unhealthy behaviors through increased tobacco and alcohol taxes and taxes on sugary beverages.

Ensure that Texas is Prepared for Successful Implementation of the PPACA in 2014

For children and families to benefit from health reform implementation, Texas must: ensure the Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) and HHSC gain the necessary statutory authority during the 2011 Texas Legislative Session to prepare for health reform implementation in 2014; secure strong private insurance market reform; and, develop and shape program design and implementation plans under PPACA so that eligibility, enrollment, and cost-sharing systems in public programs and the new exchanges work well for children and their parents.

Reach All CHIP and Medicaid-Eligible Uninsured Children

More than half of Texas' 1.2 million uninsured children are currently eligible, but not enrolled, in CHIP and Children's Medicaid. Texas must invest in the identification, enrollment and retention of eligible children in CHIP and Medicaid.

Protect Existing Funds for Early Childhood Education

A proven solution for preventing Texans from entering the juvenile and adult justice systems is investing in high quality early childhood education and development. In 2006, the Bush School of Government at Texas A&M University conducted a cost-benefit analysis of high quality child care, Head Start, and public school pre-k programs. The study found that every \$1.00 invested in these programs returns at least \$3.50 in savings to local economies. Savings are realized through fewer special education referrals, fewer children forced to repeat a grade, more children graduating from high school and entering college, and fewer Texans entering the juvenile and adult justice systems. Texas must protect current investments in early childhood education so that at-risk children start Kindergarten prepared to succeed in school and in life.