

**U.S. Department of Education
Office of Communications & Outreach, Press Office
400 Maryland Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202**

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Contacts:

U.S. Department of Education, Press Office (202) 401-1576 or press@ed.gov

Obama Administration Encourages Schools and Districts to Enroll Students in Healthcare Coverage through School Registration

As students begin the new school year, the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services are calling on states and districts to help enroll students in healthcare coverage during school registration processes and ensure students have access to the health coverage they need.

Earlier today, U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King Jr. and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Burwell and District of Columbia Public Schools Chancellor Kaya Henderson joined the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), AASA, The School Superintendents Association and other officials at Cardozo Education Campus for a roundtable discussion highlighting best practices for getting more students enrolled in health care. CDF and AASA have developed the [Insure All Children toolkit](#), informed by extensive work with districts in California, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, on how schools and districts can enroll students in healthcare coverage through routine school registration processes.

"As a nation, there is more we can do to help children access the care they need to stay healthy and to be ready to learn," said King. "Enrolling or linking students to coverage through school registration processes is just one of many ways that education and health stakeholders and agencies can partner to ensure all students as healthy and ready to learn."

"Children do better in the classroom when they are healthy and ready for learning," said Burwell. "As we gear up for Open Enrollment's start on Nov. 1, we want to make sure more kids have access to quality care that will keep them healthy, active, and prepared to learn through the year."

[Research shows](#) that children who have access to health coverage are more likely to graduate from high school and college than uninsured children. In addition, when eligible parents get enrolled in Medicaid, their eligible children are more likely to get enrolled and receive necessary and preventive care.

"We urgently need to change the odds to help our most vulnerable children succeed in our global economy," said Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund. "Giving every child a healthy start should be the goal of every school district, school and parent. We

know healthy children do better in school. This is something schools can do to help close achievement gaps right now.”

“As a key ambassador in every community, support from the superintendent is critical to fully implement and sustain policies and practices within a school district,” said Daniel A. Domenech, executive director, AASA. “With more than half of America’s public school students living in low-income households, it is more important than ever for school districts around the country to join us in this initiative which touches the lives of our children and their families. And it is imperative that health and other community agencies and advocates partner with and support schools in this enrollment effort. Health insurance improves health access and outcomes, which in turn, improves educational outcomes.”

In the nation’s capital, the site of today’s roundtable, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) has implemented a strategy as part of school registration that directs families and students toward health care enrollment and services. Through efforts like this and other practices, DC now has a 97 percent coverage rate for children. DC has also built a model partnership between education and health agencies that allows for data sharing, fostering better tracking of students who do not receive coverage and directing services to students and schools in highest need.

While the nation has made significant progress expanding health insurance for more children, nearly 4.5 million children under age 18—about one in 17—remain uninsured. School-aged children (ages 6-17) are more likely than younger children to be uninsured, and account for nearly three out of four uninsured children in the nation. [About 2.8 million uninsured children are eligible for Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program](#) (CHIP), but are not yet enrolled. The children who remain uninsured are often the hardest to reach because of various enrollment and retention barriers, including immigration status and homelessness. Schools and districts have an opportunity to help close these gaps.

Today’s announcement builds on efforts that began in January 2016 where, the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services launched their first toolkit entitled [“Healthy Students, Promising Futures.”](#) The toolkit highlighted state and local practices that can improve and expand school-based health services. Outlining concrete resources to support communities and schools in providing or connecting students to adequate health care will yield countless tangible benefits for society.

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About The Children’s Defense Fund

The Children’s Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is 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.

About AASA, The School Superintendents Association

AASA, the School Superintendents Association, represents, works alongside, supports, and is the voice of superintendents and education leaders across the United States. Thirteen thousand

strong and 151 years old, we remain committed to excellence and equity for each and every child in public schools. Leveraging our 49 state affiliates and national partners, we focus on developing school system leaders who can meet the challenges facing 21st century students and beyond.