



The *covering Kids*™ Initiative



In 1997, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation launched *Covering Kids: A National Health Access Initiative for Low-Income, Uninsured Children* to help states and local communities increase the number of children who benefit from health coverage programs. At that time, 11 million children in the United States were uninsured. At least 8 million of those children were eligible for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) or Medicaid but were not enrolled.

What began as a \$13 million initiative planned for up to 15 states grew into a \$47 million initiative with statewide coalitions in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and local coalitions in more than 170 communities. Using grants from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, *Covering Kids* coalitions came together to design and implement strategies to:

- ◆ Conduct outreach programs to identify and enroll uninsured children who are eligible for Medicaid and SCHIP
- ◆ Simplify enrollment processes for Medicaid and SCHIP
- ◆ Coordinate health care coverage programs for children in low-income families

The Southern Institute on Children and Families, a non profit public policy organization based in Columbia, S.C., serves as the National Program Office for the *Covering Kids* Initiative.

To support the work of the *Covering Kids* Initiative, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation launched the *Covering Kids* Communications Campaign in 2000. The *Covering Kids* Communications Campaign is managed by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and administered by GMMB, a strategic communications firm based in Washington, D.C. Award-winning market research for the campaign found that although most uninsured children were eligible for low-cost or free health care coverage through SCHIP or Medicaid, many parents simply did not know about the programs or believe their children could qualify. The *Covering Kids* Communications Campaign supports the outreach efforts of the *Covering Kids* grantees and uses paid advertising, earned media, and corporate, organizational and media partnerships to inform working parents that their uninsured children may qualify for low-cost or free health care coverage. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation invested an additional \$26 million in this effort.

By 2002, the number of uninsured children in the United States had dropped to 8 million. The *Covering Kids* Initiative, along with many others, contributed to this success in reducing the number of children who are uninsured. As a result of these and other efforts, more children in America have access to the health care they need and deserve.

Covering Kids and *Covering Kids & Families* National Program Office

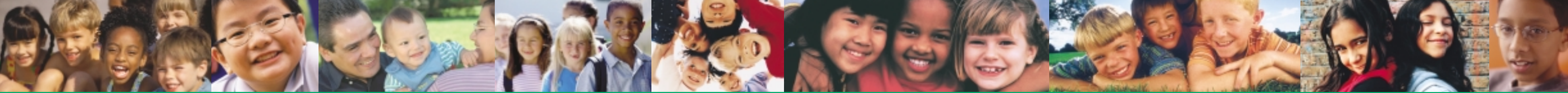
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Making Enrollment Family Friendly through Simplification

Covering Kids played a significant role in working with states to simplify the process required to establish eligibility for SCHIP and Medicaid. Simplified enrollment procedures have helped eligible children and families gain access to health care coverage programs by removing barriers, thereby making it less burdensome to enroll and stay enrolled. As a result of these simplification efforts, SCHIP and Medicaid enrollment for children's health care coverage is now more family friendly.

STATES HAVE MADE GREAT STRIDES IN SIMPLIFYING THEIR ENROLLMENT PROCEDURESⁱ

- ◆ 39 states and the District of Columbia make health coverage available to children in families of four with incomes of up to \$36,800 a year.
- ◆ 46 states and D.C. do not require face-to-face interviews to determine eligibility for their Medicaid and separate SCHIP programs.
- ◆ 43 states and D.C. do not use asset tests to determine eligibility for their Medicaid and separate SCHIP programs.
- ◆ 17 states guarantee a full 12 months of coverage for children enrolled in their Medicaid and separate SCHIP programs, regardless of changes in family circumstances.
- ◆ 9 states have adopted a presumptive eligibility option (providing immediate coverage as soon as an application is submitted) for children in Medicaid, and six states use the option in both their Medicaid and separate SCHIP programs.
- ◆ 18 states do not require children to be uninsured for a length of time before they can enroll in the state's SCHIP-funded programs.
- ◆ 13 states do not require families to provide verification of income when applying for the state's Medicaid and separate SCHIP programs, relying instead on existing state databases to gather that information.
- ◆ 41 states and D.C. allow children's coverage for the state's Medicaid and separate SCHIP programs to be renewed annually.
- ◆ 47 states and D.C. do not require face-to-face interviews for the renewal of children enrolled in the state's Medicaid and separate SCHIP programs.

Coordinating Health Care Coverage Programs for Children

Covering Kids coalitions worked with states to ensure that applications, policies, and processes for enrollment and renewal for SCHIP and Medicaid were consistent from one program to the other. Effective coordination of health care coverage programs makes it possible for eligible children to be automatically placed into the program for which they qualify. This prevents loss of health care coverage when changes occur in family situations or administrative procedures.

ADVANCES IN COORDINATING SCHIP AND MEDICAID PROGRAMSⁱⁱ

- ◆ 33 of the 35 states with separate SCHIP and Medicaid programs use a joint application that relieves families of the burden of completing a second application if they are found ineligible for one program.
- ◆ 21 out of 35 states with separate SCHIP programs allow families to use a joint form to renew coverage for children's Medicaid and SCHIP.

ⁱ The Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured (June 2002). "Enrolling Children and Families in Health Coverage: The Promise of Doing More."

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

Reaching Families with Uninsured Children

From 1998 to 2002, *Covering Kids* coalitions across the country worked with health professionals, educators, businesses, public officials, social service agencies and faith-based organizations to identify and enroll uninsured children who were eligible for SCHIP or Medicaid. During the annual Back-to-School enrollment drive, *Covering Kids* outreach events were organized throughout the country to reach families at a time when they are particularly focused on ensuring that their children's health records are in order for the beginning of the school year. These on-the-ground outreach efforts were bolstered by the Communications Campaign's use of paid advertising, earned media, and corporate, organizational and media partnerships.

SUCCESSES OF THE OUTREACH EFFORTS

- ◆ More than 500,000 calls were generated to state and national health coverage program hotlines.
 - Call volume increased an average of more than 200 percent in communities where *Covering Kids* aired paid advertisements.
 - Calls to the national 1(877) KIDS-NOW hotline increased an average of more than 180 percent during the advertising periods.
- ◆ A potential audience of more than 285 million readers, listeners and viewers was reached through nearly 40,000 news stories.
- ◆ A potential audience of more than 286 million customers was reached through partnerships with more than 25 national and regional companies in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.
- ◆ Nearly 3 million professionals who are in touch with more than 40 million children and families were reached through partnerships with more than 100 national organizations.
- ◆ A total of nearly 2,500 outreach and enrollment activities have been held in all 50 states and the District of Columbia during the Back-to-School enrollment drives.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Launches the Next Phase: covering kids & families

Many states have expanded their health coverage programs to include parents and other adults who work in jobs that either do not provide health care coverage benefits for their employees or the coverage that is offered is not affordable. In response to the need to continue support for public and private coalitions working to enroll uninsured children in SCHIP and Medicaid and to help the coalitions to assist uninsured adults, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation launched *Covering Kids & Families* in 2002, a national initiative to increase the number of children and adults who benefit from federal and state health care coverage programs. This \$55 million initiative brings the Foundation's total investment in *Covering Kids* and *Covering Kids & Families* to \$126 million. As with *Covering Kids*, the Southern Institute on Children and Families is the National Program Office for the *Covering Kids & Families* Initiative.

Working through broad statewide and local coalitions, *Covering Kids & Families* builds on the work and experience of *Covering Kids*. In 2002, this four-year initiative began working with new eligible populations and seeks to build enduring national and regional capacity to carry on program activities beyond its funding period.

