Wintertime Kids' Coverage Roundup… Tis the Season (to get Insured!)

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Written by: Questions?



It's been a busy end-of-year for Utah kids' health coverage, from ACA open enrollment to full Medicaid expansion (almost!). Here's what's been going on and what lies ahead in 2020...

Where are Utah kids going??

At the last Utah Medicaid Advisory Committee meeting, we learned that 398 children dis-enrolled from Medicaid and CHIP in October. While this is better than the 2,637 who lost coverage the previous month (no, that's not a typo), the question remains: Where are these kids going?? Are they moving over to the private insurance market? Or are they uninsured? Unfortunately, we still don't know.

American Community Survey data suggest lower income children are the most likely to be uninsured in Utah. However, we do not have good real-time data to track why Utah kids are dis-enrolling from Medicaid or CHIP at such an unprecedented rate.

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Reasons for this coverage loss may include red tape and confusion about children's health insurance options, and federal anti-immigrant hostilities creating a climate of fear for many families. But again, our best data has a one-year lag time. It is critical we make sure kids are getting connected with health insurance *now.* We know from research that when kids go uninsured it has a negative impact on their life trajectory.

We commend our state agencies for their attention to this issue; we urge them to survey families who recently lost coverage so that we can make sure kids are getting covered and s*taying covered*.

Full Medicaid expansion*… coming soon to Utah?

In November, the Utah Department of Health submitted its "fallback" waiver request to fully expand Medicaid! On December 7th, the federal comment period closed. THANK YOU to the over 4,800 people who submitted federal and state comments.

We now await federal approval for Utah to enact full Medicaid expansion. It's been a long, complicated road, but we just might get there. Find out if you're eligible for Medicaid.

*Unfortunately, this is not *exactly* the expansion Utahns voted for. Our state is tacking on harmful work requirements, premiums, surcharges and red tape to Medicaid coverage for the newly eligible. These added requirements will make it harder for Utah parents and children to get care. If approved, we will work hard to prevent these provisions from causing families to lose the coverage and care they need.

Have a story to share about how Medicaid coverage will make a difference in your life? Share your story here.

Open Enrollment: Last Day to Apply is December 15th!

In need of health insurance for you or your family? Call 2-1-1 or visit TakeCareUtah.org to learn more about the health insurance marketplace.

What's coming up in 2020?

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We are excited to see many opportunities- big and small- to help Utah kids and parents get connected with health insurance in 2020:

- Expanded texting support to help kids and families connect with coverage, thanks to an exciting new campaign through United Way of Salt Lake.
- Medicaid outreach from the Utah Department of Health! The Department is hiring outreach workers to help eligible individuals learn about Medicaid expansion. This is an exciting step to help more parents enroll.
- Finally, the Utah Department of Health will -hopefully- be releasing guidelines for Medicaid ACOs, which will allow them to remind eligible members of their upcoming renewals. Many eligible individuals often lose coverage when their renewal is due. (Legislation passed in 2019 on this issue, but the guidelines have yet to be released)

… And so much more! Here's to a 2020 where more Utah kids and families can get access to affordable health coverage and care!

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