



The Center for Public Policy Priorities

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State Agencies Set Public Hearings on the Future of CHIP

★ *No matter whose statistics you look at, Texas has the highest percentage of uninsured children in the U.S. With 1.3 million uninsured children, 24.5% of all Texas children lack health insurance – just short of 1 in every 4.*

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (THHSC) and the Texas Department of Health (TDH) are planning a series of hearings to hear public comment on options for creating “Phase II” of Texas’ Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Dates have been set for seven hearings, though locations have not been finalized. Due to the short notice, we are providing this incomplete information to you now, so that you can reserve time on your calendars until final location information is available. We hope that you will consider attending these hearings if one is held in your area.

A brief report on options for Texas CHIP developed by state agency staff called “CHIP Phase II Options” is being used as a framework for discussion of the future of CHIP by Legislative committees. This report can be seen on the TDH website at www.tdh.state.tx.us. If you lack Internet access, please call the CPPP and we will FAX or mail a copy to you. Important things to know in looking at this report and preparing comments for these public hearings include:

1. *The report makes no recommendations about what Texas’ **upper income cap** for participation in CHIP should be. The Center and the other members of Texas’ CHIP Coalition support covering the largest number of children possible by capping the program at the federal maximum of twice the poverty level.*
2. *The report’s description of **a public information campaign** about CHIP does not envision a unified program to insure all Texas children as supported by the Texas CHIP Coalition. Specifically, the Coalition supports a public information campaign to let all Texans know that their uninsured children could be covered through either Medicaid, CHIP, or Texas Healthy Kids Corporation.*
3. *The report makes no mention of one of the CHIP Coalition’s top concerns: the simplification of Medicaid eligibility to allow for **the use of a single application form for families applying for either CHIP or Medicaid**. Without a simple, family-friendly enrollment process, outreach and public information efforts will be wasted.*

| THHSC-TDH CHIP HEARINGS | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|
| City | Date | Location |
| Austin | October 29 | State Capitol Extension Auditorium |
| Lubbock | November 12 | (not set) |
| Brownsville | November 17 | Cameron County Courthouse |
| San Antonio | November 18 | (not set) |
| Arlington | November 24 | Arlington Community Center |
| Houston | December 2 | TDH Regional Office |
| El Paso | December 3 | (not set) |

Background: CHIP In a Nutshell

CHIP is a critically important program with the potential to provide health insurance to more than **one million** uninsured Texas children. Congress created the new federal block grant program in August 1997 to cover children in families with incomes at or below two times (200% of) the federal poverty level (FPL). As an interim measure, state officials exercised (effective July 1998) the option under CHIP law for states to extend Medicaid eligibility to teenagers under the FPL. Since the Texas Legislature has not been in session since that time, Texas is one of the last states to make major decisions about what kind of program to create with the new federal funds. (Texas is allotted up to \$2.5 billion dollars for the first 5 years of the program.) The program is **optional** for states, so our Legislature could create a program that is generous and covers many of our uninsured children, or one that is quite limited. For more information: see Policy Pages #58 and #66, and the Texas CHIP Coalition website at <http://www.main.org/txchip/> or call Anne Dunkelberg at the CPPP, (512) 320-0222.

Want to Learn More About CHIP in Your Community? The March of Dimes has planned education seminars across the state to help local community members understand the choices available to Texas as the Legislature considers how to structure the Children's Health Insurance Program. The Center strongly recommends these forums, which provide excellent, easy-to-understand information about CHIP. For more information contact the March of Dimes CHIP office: (512) 494-9937.

March of Dimes Community CHIP Education Forums

| City/Region | When | Where |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| TEXARKANA | October 29, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. | Special Events on the Blvd. |
| WESLACO/VALLEY | November 4, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. | Palm Aire Best Western; FM 1015 & Expressway 83. |
| LUBBOCK | November 6, 8:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. | McInturff Conference Center, University Medical Center 602 Indiana Ave. |
| CORPUS CHRISTI | November 10, 9-11:30 a.m. | Driscoll Children's Hospital Auditorium |
| TEMPLE | November 11th, for time call (512) 477-3221 | First Christian Church |
| HOUSTON: | November 12, for time call (713) 623-2020 | Memorial-Hermann Healthcare System Wilson Turner Auditorium; 7737 S.W. Freeway |
| EL PASO | November 16, for time call (210) 696-1030 | Camino Real Hotel |
| SAN ANTONIO | November 30, 8:30 a.m.-12 noon | Trinity University—Fiesta Room |
| NACOGDOCHES/ LUFKIN: | November 19, 11:30 a.m.- 1:30 p.m. | 805 E. Main Street |
| WACO | November 20 | for time and location call (512) 477-3221 |

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