



CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

A Voice for Washington's Children, Youth & Families

Messaging for Cover All Kids campaign, 2009 legislative session Prepared 11-12-08

The 1-minute version

Washington has committed to ensuring every child in the state has health coverage. The foresight our leaders showed in developing the Apple Health for Kids program nearly two years ago is now playing a key role in protecting the economic security of Washington families and the state as a whole. This time of extreme economic insecurity is exactly when we need to complete the phase-in of our successful program to include moderate-income families who lack adequate health coverage. We wrote our commitment to getting all children covered into law—we need sustain that commitment to cover all kids when families need it most.

Detailed messages

Our common value

Our leaders committed to ensuring every child in the state has health care coverage with passage of the historic Cover All Kids law in 2007. With bipartisan support, lawmakers made sure families with no other reasonable options could access affordable coverage for their children through Washington's Apple Health for Kids program.

- Apple Health for Kids has been extremely successful at getting kids covered.
- Nearly 40,000 previously uninsured children enrolled in the program in the first year after the Cover All Kids law went into effect.
- Washington now has fewer uninsured children than at any point in the past two decades and boasts one of the lowest uninsurance rates in the country.

Addressing the biggest barrier (\$3.2 billion deficit)

With the election of Barak Obama, Washington state now has partners in the White House and on Capitol Hill to support us in reaching our goal of covering all kids. As we move forward with our phase-in of the Cover All Kids law, we are playing a key role in protecting the economic security of Washington families and the state as a whole at a time when we need it most.

- Covering children is cost-effective. The annual cost of covering a child is one-third of the cost of a single hospitalization for a treatable ailment like asthma. In Washington, children make up 35 percent of Medicaid enrollees, but account for only 16 percent of the costs.
- Thanks to Apple Health for Kids, thousands of families across Washington, who are struggling to meet the rising costs of food and housing, now have the peace of mind that comes from knowing that if their children get sick they have the comprehensive medical coverage to take care of them.

- With hardworking parents losing their jobs and potentially their homes, families need health security for their kids more than ever.
- A report from the Kaiser Family Foundation in early October showed families are more concerned about how to pay for health coverage than how to pay their mortgage.
- Overwhelming numbers of family bankruptcies are caused by medical bills. One hospitalization for an asthma attack brought on by a soccer game or an emergency appendectomy and a family could be plunged into debt that they cannot get out of. This puts the economic security not only of families, but of the state at further risk since the stability of the state is based on the economic stability of taxpayers. (*Nearly half of personal bankruptcies are related to health care bills, a number that increased by 40% last year.*)
- We all know that when there is no other option, kids receive their care not at the doctor's office but the emergency room –this is the most expensive and inefficient option for families, and taxpayers, since the primary source of funding for uncompensated care is government dollars.

The Ask

This time of extreme economic insecurity is exactly when we need to sustain our commitment to Washington's children and families. It is essential that we focus on the stress and strain of moderate-income families and complete the steps outlined in the law to ensure that moderate-income families who are hurting and need help can access coverage for their children. We also need to:

- Ensure that all children are able to get the acute mental health services promised in the Cover All Kids law.
- Sustain funding for the outreach, enrollment assistance, and health promotion activities necessary to help families get the health care their children need.
- Encourage high-quality health care using the "medical home" model recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics by giving doctors extra financial support to conduct the full range of developmental screens in the first five years of a child's life.

Our vision

We know that making sure all kids are covered is the right thing to do, and our efforts have paid off in one of the lowest child uninsurance rates in the country. Now, when families need it most, Apple Health for Kids will protect the economic security of working families in this time of great instability.

Sources for research/data cited in messages:

Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. "Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: Election 2008" Issue 11 October 2008. <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/upload/7832.pdf>

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