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Ohio receives over \$12 Million for Cutting Red Tape to Cover Uninsured Kids

COLUMBUS, OHIO – Today, Ohio received good news that it will get \$12,376,364 in bonus payments from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Ohio is one of fifteen states to receive a total of \$206 million in bonus payments recognizing their success in covering uninsured children.

“This funding is national recognition for Ohio’s success in making government work better to cover uninsured children. As a result of hard work and leadership by state officials and county departments of job and family services, Ohio has cut red tape to make scarce Medicaid dollars more efficiently on covering uninsured kids instead of processing duplicative paperwork” stated Amy N. Swanson, Executive Director at Voices for Ohio’s Children.

The performance bonuses were established by the Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 (CHIPRA) to incentivize states that have cut through red tape and administrative hurdles to enroll significantly more uninsured children in their Medicaid programs than would have been enrolled otherwise. Ohio’s reward resulted from a combination of system reforms and success at enrolling eligible children.

Cutting the red tape is even more important now, because of the recession, as more and more families have lost both jobs and employer-sponsored insurance. “We’ve got to keep up the good work, because we see the economic downturn continuing to hit Ohio families hard, families who never thought they would need these programs are turning to them to help protect their children. We know if we use these limited resources to continue strengthening coverage for uninsured kids, we can make Medicaid work even better for families and deliver even more value for taxpayers” stated Joel Potts, Executive Director at the Ohio Job and Family Services Directors’ Association.

There are no restrictions on how states spend their performance bonus awards, however, Voices for Ohio’s Children and the Ohio Job and Family Services Directors’ Association urge Ohio to invest some of their performance bonus dollars in local efforts to streamline eligibility and renewal processes.

“Ohio should invest in the kinds of system improvements that will yield long-term rewards. For cash-strapped counties, investments like computer enhancements to speed up processes and reduce waiting time for clients will deliver returns for decades,” stated Joel Potts.

An estimated 110,000 Ohio children are uninsured, but, two out of three of Ohio’s uninsured children—about 77,000-- are already eligible but not enrolled. Research shows many of children are uninsured because they lost coverage due to paperwork snafus or complex administrative requirements. By cutting red tape and simplifying enrollment, Ohio can reduce the barriers that stand between thousands of uninsured Ohio children and the coverage they need.

Health coverage also means children can get the care they need for healthy development, like well-child visits, immunizations, vision and dental checks. “Keeping families and children healthy is surely the right medicine for our state. As the health care homes and family doctors to nearly 200,000 Ohio children, many of whom are enrolled in the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), we support policies to maintain and improve care for beneficiaries”, said Randy Runyon, CEO and President of the Ohio Association of Community Health Centers.

“Investing some of these one-time funds provides an opportunity to build on Ohio’s progress in covering uninsured kids and make sure that low-income children can access and keep health coverage” continued Potts and Swanson.

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Voices for Ohio's Children www.vfc-oh.org is the non-partisan voice of Ohio's nearly 3 million children. With more than 100 collaborative partners, we impact the changes in public policy that improve the health, safety, education, family stability and childcare of Ohio's children and their families.

Ohio Job and Family Services Directors' Association (OJFSDA) www.ojfsda.org is a not-for-profit statewide organization established in 1946. OJFSDA represents Ohio's 88 County Departments of Job and Family Services Directors on the local, state, and national level. OJFSDA communicates key issues and solutions regarding the delivery of social services, to Ohio policymakers, legislators, and other decision makers.