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**OHIO RECEIVES LONG-AWAITED APPROVAL TO COVER MORE KIDS**  
*Federal red tape is cut; Nearly all uninsured Ohio kids will be eligible*

COLUMBUS--December 8, 2008--Today Ohio's kids received a holiday present that has been a year and a half in the making: Now nearly all Ohio children are eligible for health coverage through Healthy Start Healthy Families, our state's successful, cost-effective Medicaid/State Children's Health Insurance (SCHIP) program.

In June 2007, Ohio's leaders joined together across partisan lines to extend coverage to uninsured Ohio children--approximately 50,000--living in families with incomes between 200%-300% of the federal poverty level. However, the Bush Administration put in place an administrative roadblock that stalled efforts to cover these children.

Today the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicare Services allowed a procedural deadline to pass with no action, tacitly granting long-delayed approval for the children's coverage expansion adopted more than 18 months ago.

"Ohio's children have waited too long for this day," said Voices for Ohio's Children Executive Director Amy Swanson. "Now, in these tough economic times, the leadership and foresight of Ohio's leaders can finally provide families with the children's health coverage they need more than ever. As soon as fiscally possible, Ohio should assure that eligible families can enroll their children."

The approval to provide more uninsured children with health coverage comes as state leaders are considering ways to address Ohio's serious budget shortfalls. To provide relief to states facing deficits, federal policymakers are considering an increase in the federal match for state Medicaid expenditures and reauthorization of SCHIP with increased state funding and incentives for states that invest in enrolling eligible but uninsured kids.

"Covering more uninsured Ohio kids is right for Ohio families and for Ohio's economy," said Swanson. "With support from our new and returning leaders in Washington, Ohio can receive much-needed relief that will give kids the health coverage they need and also provide a boost to our state's health care industry and the jobs that depend on it."

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

families.

To learn more about Voices for Ohio's Children, please visit [www.vfc-oh.org](http://www.vfc-oh.org).

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