



NEWS RELEASE

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RECORD NUMBER OF CHILDREN DROPPED FROM CHIP IN MAY

Only Once in Texas History (2003) Have More Children Been Dropped

Austin, TX—Today the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) announced that 17,078 fewer children will be covered by the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in May than in April. This is the second largest number of children ever to be disenrolled in one month, second only to immediately after state budget cuts in 2003. In September 2003, there were 507,259 Texas children enrolled in CHIP; with today's announcement that number stands at 305,991, a drop of more than 201,000 children (39.7%) since that time.

"This drastic drop in CHIP coverage makes it even more urgent for the Senate to take up HB 109, legislation that overwhelmingly passed the House and would allow children to apply for CHIP once a year instead of twice, eliminate a 90-day waiting period for coverage, and let families deduct child care expenses when determining their eligibility," said Anne Dunkelberg, Associate Director of the Center for Public Policy Priorities.

The decline from April to May is due to one of the poorest renewal rates in CHIP history. Children transferred from CHIP to Medicaid in May offset less than 10% of the children denied CHIP for the month.

Currently legislation is also on the table that would direct the state to correct the problems plaguing enrollment for the CHIP and Children's Medicaid programs.

"It is critical that the legislature also act to address delays in coverage, understaffing, and processing errors in both CHIP and Medicaid," Dunkelberg said. "Thousands of children are getting dropped from health coverage and getting lost in the system. Even HB 109 will not be enough if there still aren't enough staff to properly process applications and renewals."

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The Center for Public Policy Priorities is a nonprofit, nonpartisan policy research organization committed to improving conditions for low-and moderate-income families.