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Contact: Kim Cox

(803) 898-4439

coxkim@scdhhs.gov

SCDHHS earns \$2.4 Million Bonus for ‘Express Lane’ eligibility

COLUMBIA, S.C. — The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has awarded a \$2,429,232 million bonus to the South Carolina Department of Health Human Services (SCDHHS) for streamlining the reenrollment process for children into its Medicaid program, the agency announced today. The federal Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA) initiative makes bonuses eligible to states implementing multiple policies to simplify enrollment and expand coverage for children.

SCDHHS collaborated with the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) to match data from its food stamps or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs to verify that children with expiring Medicaid enrollment were still eligible and extended their enrollment for another year without requiring families to complete redundant paperwork. Families who participate in those SCDSS programs must meet income requirements that are below the threshold for receiving Medicaid benefits. Since April 2011, when this effort started, SCDHHS has automated the reenrollment for more than 206,000 children in South Carolina. This increased efficiency has resulted in an estimated savings of more than 60,000 SCDHHS employee hours, or approximately \$1.4 million.

SCDHHS qualified for the annual performance bonus for the second year by meeting at least five program features within its Medicaid and CHIP programs known to streamline enrollment and retention in health coverage programs. In addition, South Carolina was required to provide data documenting a significant increase in Medicaid enrollment among children over the course of the fiscal year.

“We are pleased to be recognized for a second year in a row for our efforts to increase meaningful access to care for South Carolina’s children,” SCDHHS Director Anthony Keck said. “This has been a terrific collaborative effort between CMS, SCDHHS, SCDSS, the Legislature, providers and advocates. It is a good example of how much opportunity there is to work together by focusing on health first and foremost.”

Children enrolled in a Medicaid health plan through SCDHHS receive coverage for doctor visits, vaccinations and dental care, among other benefits. Enrollees join a coordinated care health plan in their counties of residence and are paired with a primary care physician and a network of specialty care providers.

In 2010 South Carolina ranked 5th from the bottom nationally for its percentage of insured children (13 percent). This is the latest federally-recognized success in a series of efforts by SCDHHS to improve the health of children – a priority of Gov. Nikki R. Haley’s administration since she took office in 2011. Earlier this year the South Carolina General Assembly approved the governor’s request and appropriated \$29 million to SCDHHS to continue to improve children’s enrollment statistics.

SCDHHS recently launched other programs focused on improving care for children, while reducing overall costs to the taxpayer:

- Improving infant health through the SC Birth Outcomes Initiative, which is designed to reduce pre-term births and health disparities among newborns;
- Working with Medicaid health plans and other state agencies to identify and provide treatment for expectant mothers with substance abuse problems and those who suffer from depression or domestic violence;
- Encouraging baby-friendly hospital policies by rewarding those with programs to promote breastfeeding; and,
- Reducing administrative fees and creating financial incentives for health plans that meet and exceed certain quality benchmarks, including delivering recommended children’s health screenings and immunizations.

Earlier this year, under a related effort, SCDHHS began automatically enrolling children who are currently eligible Medicaid but were not yet receiving benefits. Since October, SCDHHS has automatically enrolled more than 49,000 eligible children into the Medicaid program.

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services provides health care benefits to more than 1.1 million South Carolinians and financially supports almost half of all births in the state. Its mission is to purchase the most health for our citizens in need at the least possible cost to the taxpayer.

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