

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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New Efforts Underway to Enroll All Eligible Alameda County Children in Health Coverage

Board of Supervisors commits to bolstering safety net of health care coverage and vision services

Oakland, CA—Today, on behalf of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, Health Chair Wilma Chan announced two critically important efforts to expand children’s health coverage in Alameda County. Supervisor Chan announced that the county will take new steps to enroll the 13,000 children in the county who are eligible but not enrolled in publicly-funded health programs, like Medi-Cal and Healthy Families. These steps also coincide with the County declaring it will accept the challenge from U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius – to enroll all eligible children.

Supervisor Chan also announced that Alameda County Board of Supervisors and Alameda Alliance for Health, a not-for-profit health plan, are committed to continue vision coverage access for children. Funding for vision care in the Healthy Families Program for nearly 900,000 children enrolled throughout the state in the program, including 21,000 children in Alameda County, is at risk during the deliberations over the California budget.

“Healthy kids make healthy communities,” said Supervisor Chan in an event at Oakland’s La Clinica de la Raza. “When it comes to eligible children, we know that enrolling them in public programs can change their lives. Enrollment also brings with it federal and state matching funds into our community health system. We are going to do all that we can as a county and with our community partners, to enroll these children and cover them with health and vision benefits they need,” Chan added.

Alameda County also announced that it has accepted a challenge from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to connect all eligible kids to coverage. In 2010, Secretary Sebelius announced the challenge to enroll the 5 million children nationwide who are eligible but not enrolled in publicly funded health programs.

Alameda County is the first county in the nation to accept the challenge to cover all eligible children. With its partners, Alameda County has committed to:

- Work with partners in the community to contact, engage and enroll families
- Use technology – exploring lessons from other counties using the One E-App electronic application – to help families and service providers enroll children faster and easier
- Maximize its use of existing county resources – staff, outreach, and materials – to help enroll more children

“We recognize that community organizations and medical providers like ourselves have an important role to play in helping families enroll their children,” said La Clinica de la Raza CEO Jane Garcia. “We are pleased to help Alameda County accept this challenge and we will work with our medical and administrative teams to help families find the coverage they are eligible for,” she added.

In announcing the Secretary’s challenge *Connecting Kids to Coverage Challenge*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius described it as “a five-year campaign that will challenge federal officials, states, governors, mayors, community organizations, faith leaders, and concerned individuals to build on our success and take the next step by finding and enrolling those five million children in Medicaid and CHIP. We all have a stake in America’s children, and together, we will assure that millions more get the care they need.”

Healthy Families Program Vision Coverage to be Maintained

Alameda County has nearly 21,000 children who receive vision benefits through the Healthy Families Program. These benefits may be eliminated or curtailed as part of the 2012 California State Budget. Today, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors committed to work with the local health plan, Alameda Alliance for Health, to ensure these benefits remain in force. The expected commitment is valued at less than \$2 per member per month and comes from a recommended challenge grant from Measure A.

“Having vision coverage and getting yearly preventative eye exams saves money in the long run,” said Ingrid Lamirault, CEO of Alameda Alliance for Health. “The financial commitment is not large, but the potential benefits for kids are huge. When kids are able to see, they are ready to learn. When we catch things early on in eye exams, we can prevent a lifetime of challenges,” Lamirault added.

“We saw the vision benefits as a ‘must-have’ and wise investment in the health of the children of Alameda County,” added Supervisor Chan.

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Basic Alameda County & Health Coverage Statistics:

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2009 in Alameda County there were **17,504 uninsured children** (this represents approximately 5% of children in the County). Across all ages, in 2009 there were 187,438 uninsured Alameda County residents (this represents 13% of the Alameda County population). This was a 13% increase in the number of uninsured from 2008, when it totaled 166,377.

Poverty Level: Over half of uninsured children in Alameda County are low income, with 16% being under the federal poverty level, 42% between 100-200% FPL, and 44% over 200% FPL.

Race/Ethnicity: 45% of uninsured children in Alameda County are Hispanic/Latino, 29% Asian/Pacific Islander, 16% Black/African American, 9% White, and 2% Native American.

Age: Adolescents (age 12-17) comprise 45% of the uninsured under the age of 18. Elementary aged children (age 5-11) represent 35% of uninsured children and young children (aged 0-4) 20%.

It is estimated that approximately **55%** of uninsured children in Alameda County are eligible but not enrolled in public health insurance programs. **Nearly half** of these children have been enrolled in Medi-Cal or Healthy Families the previous year and have fallen off coverage.

About the Alameda Alliance for Health

Alameda Alliance for Health is a public, not-for-profit health care plan committed to making high quality health care services accessible and affordable to lower income people of Alameda County. Established in 1996, the Alliance was created by and for Alameda County residents. The Alliance Board of Governors, staff, and provider network reflect the county's cultural and linguistic diversity. The Alliance provides health care coverage to more than 120,000 children and adults through four programs: Medi-Cal, Healthy Families, Alliance Group Care (commercial plan for In Home Supportive Services workers), and Alliance CompleteCare (Medicare Advantage Special Needs Plan). Visit www.alamedaalliance.org to learn more about the Alliance.