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Select Health offers new program for uninsured children

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Uninsured children in South Carolina now have access to health care through a new program from Select Health.

The company is one of the local providers of the new State Child Health Insurance Program, commonly called S-Chip.

Tracy Pou, director of communications for Select Health of South Carolina, said the First Choice Kids program was designed to benefit uninsured children of working families.

“In terms of the economy being on the down-spiral, a lot of families find this to be a great benefit,” she said.

Children who are uninsured are eligible to take part in the program. In order for the children to meet the requirements of the program, they must be under the age of 19, and without a comprehensive health plan.

“There are certain income requirements as well,” Pou said. “It depends on family size and eligible income.”

Jeff Stensland, public information officer for the S.C. Department of Health and Human Services, said the income requirements are gauged by the current federal standards for poverty level.

“It’s for kids whose families fall between 150 percent and 200 percent of the federal poverty level,” he said. “For a family of four, that would be \$42,400 a year, that’s at 200 percent.”

Stensland said the program is similar to Medicaid in some ways, but very different in others.

“It’s a really good program designed to target well-income children who essentially aren’t poor enough to qualify for Medicaid,” he said.

Under the guidelines of the program, there are no co-pays or premiums for coverage, Stensland said.

Enrollment in the program is at about 3,000 children, but Stensland said he expects of jump in that number once school starts back in the fall.

“We typically see a jump in enrollment once school begins,” he said. “During the summer families are on vacation and not thinking about things like this, but fall is our busy time.”

Pou said, so far, customer enrollment has been good for her company, but she expects more customers to enroll as word gets out about the program.

“So far the response has been pretty positive,” she said. “We’re just happy to be able to provide the service to them.”

For more information about S.C. DHHS Healthy Connections Kids, contact an enrollment counselor at (877) 552-4642.

Below are some of the benefits offered to children living in South Carolina through the First Choice Kids program:

- Doctor’s office visits
- Well-child visits
- Immunizations
- Inpatient and outpatient hospital visits
- Vision care (one free eye exam and one pair of eyeglasses each year)
- Dental care (provided by Medicaid)
- Emergency services