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Despite availability, thousands of children go without health insurance

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NEW ORLEANS – There are 50,000 children across the state who are eligible for state health insurance called LaCHIP but have never signed up.



Video: Watch the Story

There is also help for people who have recently lost their jobs and can't afford health insurance.

For the next three days dozens of state workers are hitting malls, groceries, drug stores and other public places on a blitz to sign up thousands of infants, children and teens who are eligible but have never signed up for state health care insurance.

It's not only Medicaid. There are more than 30 different types of health insurance programs for seniors, children and the disabled. Working adults who can't make ends meet can even buy into an inexpensive health insurance policy.

"It's regular it's private health insurance that's run, state group benefits, same insurance that the state employees have. They pay \$50," said Venessa Simmons, the Regional LaCHIP Coordinator.

Some are embarrassed to sign up because they have never needed assistance.

"You're dealing with working families people that may have worked all their lives. The economy now is bad so a lot of people are being laid off from work," added Simmons.

"We've got to do something about our health rankings. We've got to do something about our children who are not insured and are unhealthy and I am just tired of being at the bottom," said Rudy Macklin, executive director of the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. "I mean, I'm tired of Louisiana being on cruise control."

Louisiana ranks at the bottom when it comes to health. Children have type 2 diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure.

"These are adult type of illnesses. Why are 11-year-olds and 10-year-olds having these types of problems? And we found out that those kids have never been to the doctor since they were born," adds Macklin.

LaCHIP insurance allows this mother to give her sons regular doctor's visits.

"We keep up with our doctor's appointments now," said Shadana Sorrell, who has her two sons on LaCHIP. They are 9- and 11-years-old.

And before you had the insurance, you couldn't keep up with the appointments?

"I couldn't afford it at all," said Sorrell, "Even with two jobs."

The blitz is already helping.

"I took the brochure because my neighbor have a daughter that needs medical care, and she don't have none at all," said Linda Crosby, a resident who passed by the sign up table.

To find out more call 1-877-2-La-CHIP or visit <http://www.lachip.org/>.