

Children's insurance enrollment promoted

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State employees and volunteers plan to visit churches, community centers, day-care centers and governmental buildings in the Baton Rouge area today and Friday in an attempt to enroll more children in a federally funded health insurance program.

The "enrollment blitz" aims to sign up as many as 3,000 more eligible children with medical insurance coverage, leaders of the effort said in a meeting in Baker on Wednesday.

Louisiana Children's Health Insurance Program, known as LaCHIP, covers eligible children until age 19 with a no-cost insurance plan.

LaCHIP is available to children in households with monthly incomes ranging from \$1,805 for one person to \$6,169 for a family of eight, or \$624 more for each additional person in the household.

For children from families with slightly higher incomes, the state also offers the LaCHIP Affordable Plan, which covers children in households earning an annual income of up to 250 percent of the federal poverty rate, or about \$55,000 per year for a family of four.

Kyle Viator of the state Department of Health and Hospitals said Wednesday that a 2007 survey shows that about 5 percent of children eligible for the programs are not enrolled.

The blitz aims to reduce that percentage.

Viator said the primary reason that many children are not benefiting from the programs is a lack of knowledge of the income guidelines.

"They think they don't qualify, or they think they can't afford it," he said.

Viator said many people are not aware that the incomes of grandparents or step-parents living in the homes are not counted when eligibility is determined.

"LaCHIP has helped me and my family," Latrice Morgan said at the Baker event.

A working mother, Morgan is able to obtain insurance for herself through her employer, but she said she depends on LaCHIP to cover her children, both of whom suffer from asthma.

DHH will hold an open house from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday at its regional LaCHIP outreach office, 2521 Wooddale Blvd., to assist families in enrolling children.

Information on the program also is available by calling (877) 252-2447 or through the Web site, <http://www.lachip.org>.

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