

Does Your Family Have Health Care Coverage?

By Emily Lewis, Manager, Charlotte County Family Services Center (941)235-0159

Back to School week is time of renewal and reflection for me. Since school started, the mornings provide quiet time to reflect on our summer activities and prepare for a school year full of fun after school programs and activities. This summer the Family Services Center hosted approximately 150 kids for summer camps with Boys & Girls Clubs and Police Athletic League (PAL) programs. Every day brought new activities and sounds of fun and laughter filled the center. Anxious children and their parents lined the halls waiting for their turn to receive their free back to school immunizations provided by the Charlotte County Health Department.

The week before school started, I noticed many parents coming to the Family Services Center to ensure that their children were signed up for one of our after school programs. Each of them carried a list, no doubt their back to school checklist. That got me thinking...I wonder if health care coverage is on that list. As this school year begins, the Family Services Center in partnership with *Covering Kids & Families* is launching our annual Back-to-School Campaign in Charlotte County to encourage parents with uninsured children to put enrolling them in Florida KidCare at the top of their back-to-school checklist.

“Kids who have healthcare coverage are better prepared to learn in school,” said Emily Lewis, Manager of the Family Services Center. “That is why enrolling uninsured children in Florida KidCare should be a top priority for parents as they prepare to send their kids back to school. The coverage offered through Florida KidCare means health security for kids and peace of mind for parents.”

There are 714,125 uninsured children in Florida and most of them are eligible for Florida low-cost health care coverage offered through Florida KidCare. Many families are not aware that their children may qualify for coverage. In Florida, a family of four can earn up to \$41,000 a year or more and qualify for Florida KidCare.

The Family Services Center and its partners will be stepping up their efforts to increase the number of children enrolled in Florida KidCare. We will be distributing print materials throughout the community and will be working towards increased access to quality healthcare for all residents of Charlotte County. These efforts are part of the 8th annual Back-to-School Campaign, a nationwide campaign of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation working to enroll children in available health care coverage programs in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Children enrolled in Florida KidCare will receive benefits such as doctor visits, hospital care, medicines and more. “The comprehensive coverage offered through Florida KidCare helps keep Florida’s kids healthy,” said Steven Mitnick, Administrator for Charlotte County Health Department. “We encourage parents to find out if their kids are eligible.”

To find out if your family is eligible for low-cost health care coverage, call toll-free 1-888-540-5437 or visit www.floridakidcare.org. For more information on programs or services at the Family Services Center, contact Emily Lewis at (941)235-0159 or via email at Emily.Lewis@charlottefl.com.

Kids with Health Care Coverage Are Better Prepared to Learn

- MOST children in Florida’s classrooms who are uninsured are eligible for low-cost children’s healthcare coverage.
- Half of all uninsured children have not had a well-child visit in the past year.
- Uninsured children are less likely to receive proper medical care for sore throats, earaches and asthma – common childhood illnesses that are often the cause of school absences.