

Thousands of uninsured children to be eligible for CHIP

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washington, D.C., Feb. 5, 2009 – The National Health Law Program (NHeLP) applauds today's action by President Obama to rescind a Health and Human Services directive that has prevented thousands of children from getting needed care under the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Issued in 2007, the directive had prevented states from expanding coverage for children in CHIP unless the children had already been uninsured for at least a year. It also imposed other onerous requirements. CHIP, which was again signed into law yesterday, provides health insurance to children who are not eligible for Medicaid but who cannot afford private insurance.

Today the President instructed Health and Human Services to rescind the August 17 policy and reinstate the procedures that had been in place before it took effect.

This simple act by President Obama will allow states as diverse as New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Louisiana and Montana to decide whether to pursue efforts to expand the number of needy children they serve through the CHIP program.

"With today's action, as with yesterday's signing of the new CHIP Act, the President has signaled his intention to keep health reform front and center using flexible, child-oriented solutions," said Emily Spitzer, Executive Director of NHeLP. "The question is no longer whether we will cover as many children as possible, but rather how we will best do that."

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