



PRESS RELEASE

El Dorado County **PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

Gayle Erbe-Hamlin, Director Dr. Jason Eberhart-Phillips, Health Officer
931 Spring Street, Placerville, CA 95667 (530) 621-6156/ FAX (530) 626-4713

Healthy People Living in Healthy Communities throughout El Dorado County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 19, 2007

CONTACT:

Margaret Williams
(530) 621-6243

www.co.el-dorado.ca.us/publichealth

Health Insurance For Kids the Focus of Cover the Uninsured Week, April 23-29

***An Estimated 3000 El Dorado County Kids Still Need Insurance,
New Local Grant Provides Funding for Outreach***

Over the past three years, the El Dorado County Public Health Department, in partnership with First 5 El Dorado Children and Families Commission and other local agencies, has been working hard to help children find health insurance. More than 2000 previously uninsured kids now have insurance. But according to Kirsten Rogers, a supervising health education coordinator with Public Health, there is more work to be done. “We estimate that there are still about 3000 kids in our county who don’t have any kind of health insurance or a medical home.”

“April 23-29 is Cover the Uninsured Week, a time to recognize the work that has been done in this area and also to commit to keep going,” said Rogers. A new local grant will provide much needed resources toward this effort. The three-year, \$800,000 grant from the California Department Health Services will provide funds to conduct outreach to families and enrollment assistance into insurance products. The effort is part of a larger Children’s Health Initiative and countywide public-private partnership called ACCEL, Access El Dorado, which has been focusing for the past three years on improved access to health insurance and health care for El Dorado County residents.

According to Rogers, many uninsured children qualify for publicly funded programs such as Healthy Families or Medi-Cal, but are not aware of these programs or are overwhelmed by the enrollment process. “Many of these families just don’t know what to do or where to go to enroll,” explained Rogers. “It’s overwhelming to them.”

Rogers and other staff in the Public Health Department reach out to families and help them determine if they qualify for these or other health insurance programs, and then assist them with the paperwork and enrollment process. If a child does not qualify for Healthy Families or Medi-Cal, enrollment staff help the families determine if the child qualifies for another available program. Families served are generally low income, but can have moderate incomes as high as 300% of the federal poverty level.

One insurance option is Healthy Kids, a product offered to families with moderate incomes. Families who qualify for Healthy Kids must pay a monthly premium, but the cost is significantly less than if they were to obtain insurance privately. Healthy Kids is a new insurance product offered through a Regional Health Initiative with El Dorado, Sacramento, Colusa, Yolo and Placer Counties.

“Our goal is to see every child in our county have health insurance,” said Rogers. “We also emphasize the importance of using health benefits once children have them, for example, getting children up to date on their health check-ups and immunizations.”

According to Rogers, many uninsured children end up at hospital emergency rooms for illnesses that could have been avoided through preventive care. “Emergency room visits are the most expensive way to provide health care and also impact services so that everyone has to wait longer,” said Rogers. “We hope to see these children get health insurance and a medical home so that they don’t have to go to the emergency room for primary care.”

For children’s health insurance enrollment assistance in El Dorado County call the Public Health Department at 1-800-388-8690.