THE CHILDREN'S CHAMPION

Insure Our Kids

Insure Our Kids is a campaign that aims to bring together health care and children's services organizations and resources to make sure that every eligible child in Tennessee gets health insurance and has access to the care they need to grow up healthy. Campaign activities focus on raising public awareness of the TennCare and CoverKids programs and increasing the availability of enrollment assistance across the state. The campaign includes training opportunities for professionals and volunteers who will become equipped to identify uninsured children who are eligible and to help them get enrolled.

If you are interested in meeting with our children's team to discuss how you can join Insure Our Kids or would like an in-person training for your organization, email Anna Walton at awalton@tnjustice.org.

We will host our first enrollment training on March 8 at 11 am (see registration details in the "Join Us" section below). A website and more materials are coming soon!

Additionally, please share your insights with us. We gladly welcome any information that you have about barriers that make it more challenging to enroll uninsured children.
ICYMI

TJC Student Ambassador Program Update

We hosted the inaugural Student Ambassador Conference on January 6, 2018. A diverse group of seven high schoolers, representing the best of Tennessee's youth, gathered at our office for an all-day event to learn about Medicaid and the state of children's health in Tennessee. One ambassador even came from Chattanooga!

To kick-off their day, they took part in an office tour with our vibrant executive director, Michele Johnson. They learned the stories behind the framed pictures of clients that adorn our purple walls. Michele shared the story of the teen mom who had to fight to have her high school counted as work to get TennCare, and 14 years later she graduated college and is working at Vanderbilt.

Then Gordon Bonnyman told the ambassadors about how he and Michele founded TJC after federal funding restricted the kind of cases Legal Aid could take on, so Michele and Gordon both decided to help the clients that Legal Aid could no longer represent.

After this brief historical overview, the ambassadors sat in a seminar on the basics of Medicaid and the value of the safety net led by TJC Staff Attorney Chris Coleman. The ambassadors were extremely engaged and eager to learn more about the complexities of health care and why CHIP had not been funded.

With their newly gained knowledge, the students heard from Aftyn Behn, TJC's Engagement Manager, who introduced TJC's advocacy work. She explained TJC's unique ability to connect client stories to creating legislative change through advocacy. The ambassadors then created posters for the Bring It Home Rally for the first day of this legislative session. The ambassadors holding their posters are pictured below.
The day ended with Kinika leading a workshop on how to write Letters to the Editor. One of the ambassadors, Hope Sloan, even had her LTE on CHIP published in the Tennessean the following week!

Please stay tuned for the video interviews with the ambassadors sharing the reasons they care about health care, based on their life experiences and their sense of justice and equality.

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Last year Family Voices of Tennessee merged with Parents Reaching Out. They are now operating under one organization name: Family Voices of Tennessee. One in five children in Tennessee has a special healthcare need, chronic illness, or disability. Family Voices of Tennessee is now equipped to serve the emotional and educational needs of more families of these children from birth to young adulthood. Visit their new website: www.familyvoicestn.org.

The last volume of the Children's Champion.

THE MORE YOU KNOW

Roadblocks to Care

On January 11, the Trump Administration announced a new policy that will allow states to deny Medicaid coverage to unemployed workers. Past administrations of both parties have determined that such a policy would undermine Medicaid's core goal of providing health coverage to people who cannot afford to pay for the medical care they need. The likely result will be an increase in bureaucracy and red tape and a reduction in access to health care for people who need it most. If Tennessee seeks to implement this misguided policy, parents living at or below
the poverty level will be hit the hardest, and their children will suffer as a result.

Most adults on Medicaid already work. The majority of those who do not work have health conditions that prevent them for working, are caring for children or a sick family member, or are in school. Denying these people Medicaid coverage would penalize those in most need of the support Medicaid provides. For that small minority of Medicaid beneficiaries who are able to work and wanting for jobs, the new policy will make their ability to reenter the workforce even more difficult.

Proposed legislation in Tennessee would only exempt parents until their children turn six years old. Taking away coverage from parents harms children as well, both by increasing the likelihood that children will be uninsured and by undermining the financial security of the entire family.

The objections to adding even more bureaucratic red tape to TennCare are bolstered by the recently issued warning from Fitch Ratings about the potential impact of additional administrative requirements on several major hospital chains headquartered in Tennessee. Tennessee tops the charts as the state with the number one rate of rural hospital closures, and this policy would further hurt already struggling hospitals and health care providers.

Read TJC's full policy brief here.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

**Federal level:**

CHIP was officially reauthorized for 6 years on Tuesday 1/22! Thank you for sharing stories, writing op-eds or letters to the editor, making calls, sending emails, and other actions that made CHIP passage a priority!

We believe Congress should act to renew CHIP for an additional four years and use those savings to invest in other programs that kids and families need, like Maternal Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) and community health centers, where many CHIP recipients get their care.

Along with saving more money, renewing CHIP for 10 years would give states and families more assurance that kids’ coverage, and the funding that comes along with it, is stable and strong. As we've certainly seen over the past few months, the longer we can fund CHIP, the better off Tennessee kids and families will be.

Please use the form below to thank our Senators and Representatives in Congress for passing CHIP. Let them know that you support an additional 4 years of CHIP funding so vital programs like MIECHV and community health centers can be fully funded.

Form to email your state senators and representatives: [https://secure.everyaction.com/HR4VbCJv1UuLDBHaLtgNWg2](https://secure.everyaction.com/HR4VbCJv1UuLDBHaLtgNWg2)
State level:

As mentioned in the "More You Know" section, on January 11th Speaker Beth Harwell filed legislation to start denying coverage to TennCare recipients based on employment status. We don't have many details as to the exact parameters, but we are concerned about what new bureaucratic hurdles would mean for Tennessee's families.

**JOIN US**

**Insure Our Kids Launch Press Conference**

March 7  
Location TBD, Nashville

Our partners will join to announce the Insure Our Kids campaign. More details to come!

**Insure Our Kids Inaugural Enrollment Webinar**

March 8 at 11 am  
Register [here](#)!

**Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth: Children's Advocacy Days**

Tuesday, March 13, 2018 at 10:00 AM - Wednesday, March 14, 2018 at 12:00 PM (CDT)  
War Memorial Auditorium  
301 6th Ave N  
Nashville, TN 37243  
Registration: [https://cad2018.eventbrite.com](https://cad2018.eventbrite.com)
As a reminder, the Tennessee Justice Center also helps with:
1. Enrollment onto TennCare and CoverKids
2. Service Issues
3. Redetermination Issues

If you ever encounter anyone who is having trouble getting health insurance or getting health services, please call TJC: (615) 255-0331.

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If there is any information you would like us to share on your behalf, including events and resources, please reply to this email.

Sincerely,

Kinika Young
Director of Children's Health
kyoung@tnjustice.org

STAY CONNECTED:

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