



## **Faith groups to “Start the Conversation” about CHIP/Children’s Medicaid**

The discussions are already occurring. Every day in Texas, parents in need talk with church leaders and faith organizations about services that can help provide emergency shelter, put food on the table or get much needed medical attention for their children. Churches and faith-based groups have an established track record of helping families get through tough times.

As part of its statewide public awareness campaign, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission is asking faith and community service groups to “Start the Conversation,” to include information about CHIP/Children’s Medicaid in the conversations they have with the families they serve.

“We know that families in need often turn to those they trust most – their spiritual leaders and the faith-based community,” says Texas Health and Human Services Executive Commissioner Albert Hawkins. “‘Start the Conversation’ is our effort to work with these groups to share information about Children’s Medicaid and CHIP with low-income families.”

The Texas Legislature recently approved changes to CHIP, including extending the coverage period to a full year and eliminating the 90 day waiting period.

Currently, Children’s Medicaid and CHIP provide health care for more than two million children in Texas. The two programs provide coverage to families who earn up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level. That’s \$41,300 a year for a family of four. Money a family pays in child care can be deducted from that income. Services include doctor visits, immunizations, hospital care, surgery, X-rays, eye exams and glasses, prescription drugs, emergency services and access to medical specialists. Dental services, including cleanings and fillings, are also covered.

HHSC is looking for organizations in cities across Texas that will help raise public awareness about the benefits offered through CHIP/Children’s Medicaid. In Houston, for example, faith-based organizations are leading a community-wide Champions for Children Health Fest on Saturday, Oct. 13, 2007, and following that up with CHIP/Children’s Medicaid Sunday on Oct. 14, when information about CHIP/Children’s Medicaid will be a part of worship services.

“Helping families learn about these programs, showing them the way, that fits our mission,” said the Rev. Manson B. Johnson, pastor of the Holman Street Baptist Church, site of the Houston health fest. “It’s a comfortable fit for us.”

For more information about the “Start the Conversation” project or CHIP/Children’s Medicaid outreach, please call Geoff Wool, HHSC Communications, at 512-424-6548 or email [Geoffrey.wool@hhsc.state.tx.us](mailto:Geoffrey.wool@hhsc.state.tx.us). Information about the programs is available at [www.CHIPmedicaid.org](http://www.CHIPmedicaid.org).

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