



Fact Sheet

Apple Health for Kids

January 2010

Apple Health for Kids, Washington State's public insurance program for children, provides access to affordable and comprehensive coverage to children in low to middle income families across the state. This essential program ensures that children receive the preventive, primary and specialty care they need to grow into healthy adults. Apple Health for Kids has been a pivotal resource for families during the economic downturn, making sure that children's health coverage is not put at risk due to changes in employment.

Since the Legislature enacted the Cover All Kids law in 2007, an additional 100,000 children have benefited from Apple Health.¹ Now, over 665,000 children—37% of children in our state—have access to care because of this important program.² The Caseload Forecast Council projects that the proportion of children on public health insurance programs will skyrocket, already at the highest level ever, up to 44% over the next two years due to the weakened economy.³ An all-cuts budget would lead to a drastic elimination of coverage for children in families between 205-300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)—\$37,352 – 54,930 per year for a family of three.

All children need health coverage to be healthy. Children need regular care and developmental screenings to prevent childhood illnesses from becoming life-long health problems. Those who do not get preventive care and early treatment are far more likely to miss school, less ready to learn and more likely to end up in the emergency room for conditions that have gotten out of control.

Covering children is cost-effective. Under Apple Health for Kids, a child can be covered for as little as \$5 a day. For the cost of a single hospital stay for a preventable condition such as an ear, nose, and throat infection, the state could provide a child *over two years of Medicaid coverage*, leveraging a generous federal match.⁴ The investments made now will pay off as healthy children grow into healthy adults with fewer health care costs.

Families across Washington State have benefited from Apple Health for Kids. As families are losing jobs and employer-provided health insurance, they are turning to public health insurance programs to ensure continuity of care for their families. Apple Health for Kids is the only program that provides coverage for children below 300% of the FPL (\$54,930 per year for a family of three). It ensures stability for families, health care providers and the state during turbulent economic times.

Community health centers (CHCs) cannot do it alone. CHCs provide high-quality primary care services regardless of ability to pay, but are not a substitute for comprehensive insurance coverage. Without Apple Health for Kids, children will lose their access to affordable specialty care and put their families at risk for catastrophic hospital bills; many will receive primary care in the most expensive setting—the emergency room—and miss out on cost-effective preventive care.

The cost of care for uninsured children increases costs for everyone, particularly for CHCs which will continue to provide comprehensive primary care, but with fewer resources. The primary care safety net is already on the brink due to the rising number of uninsured.

¹ Roger Gantz provided data on "State Financed Health Care Coverage for Children" to Apple Health Advisory Committee on 12/16/09. Report date 12/8/09.

² Department of Social and Health Services, Health and Recovery Services Administration. Report to the Governor and Legislature required by ESHB 2128: "Outreach, Application and Renewal Procedures". December 11, 2009.

³ Caseload Forecast Council. "Forecast Narrative." July 1, 2009.

⁴ The Washington State Hospital Association. "Examples of preventive care vs. emergency and hospitalization costs." March 2008.