

Children in Need

- 12.1 million children—one out of every six—live below the official poverty line.
- 17.9% of American children are hungry or at the risk of being hungry.
- An American child is more likely to be poor today than 25 or 30 years ago; more likely to be poor than an American adult; and more likely to be poor than a child living in Canada, Germany, France, Britain or Spain.

—The State of America's Children 2004, *the Children's Defense Fund*

U.S. Catholic Bishops have stated that

Very many poor families with children receive no government assistance, have no health insurance, and cannot pay medical bills. Less than half are immunized against preventable diseases such as diphtheria and polio. Poor children are disadvantaged before birth; their mothers' lack of access to high quality prenatal care leaves them at much greater risk of premature birth, low birth weight, physical and mental impairment, and death before their first birthday.

—*Economic Justice for All*, #177

As members of the Body of Christ, it is our responsibility to care for those who are most vulnerable. Children in poverty are more likely to experience poor health, unemployment, drugs and criminal activity, and a shockingly high number suffer young and violent deaths. Many are unable to keep up in class so they drop out of school or finish high school functionally illiterate.

And tragically, children who grow up in poverty are significantly more likely to be poor as adults than children who did not grow up in poverty. So the cycle continues.

Catholic Social Teaching tells us that “the fulfillment of the basic needs of the poor is of the highest priority” (*Economic Justice for All*, #90), and it is clear that concern for our children is concern for our nation's future. Because children do not have a voice in the government, it is our job to make sure that their needs are met.

Contact your Members of Congress today to ask them what they are doing about child poverty.

WRITE:

**U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515**

**U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510**

CALL:

Capitol Switchboard: 202-224-3121

E-MAIL THROUGH THE NETWORK WEB SITE:

www.networklobby.org

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NETWORK
A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

NETWORK—a Catholic leader in the global movement for justice and peace
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Meeting Children's Healthcare Needs

The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) is cooperatively financed by both state and federal governments to provide comprehensive health insurance to more than six million children. This year, approximately 17 states will not receive enough federal funding to cover the cost of SCHIP and over 630,000 children are in danger of losing access to healthcare services.

Last year, the 109th Congress passed a bill (H.R. 6164) that addressed a portion of this shortfall by redistributing unspent SCHIP funding from the previous two years. Unfortunately, this money will only make up for the shortfall until May 2007. NETWORK will closely follow the SCHIP funding issue, and will work to ensure that all states receive adequate funding.

There are many ways for you to get involved in supporting our nation's children. You can stay updated through NETWORK's weekly legislative updates, and you can make sure you are aware of your own state's status concerning children's healthcare coverage. Check with local agencies, especially hospital social workers, to understand SCHIP policy in your area. At a local level, it is important to write letters to the editor about this issue, as they are a great way to educate and inform your community. By writing letters to your state legislators and encouraging others to do so as well, you can also be effective at the state level.

The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) has proposed a plan that would ensure that all children in the United States have access to affordable comprehensive healthcare, regardless of their geographical location. This plan would effectively combine children's coverage under SCHIP and Medicaid into one plan. By working together, we can ensure that the right for all children to live healthy lives is met.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: www.cbpp.org/6-5-06health2.pdf

Children's Defense Fund: <http://www.childrensdefense.org/site/PageServer>

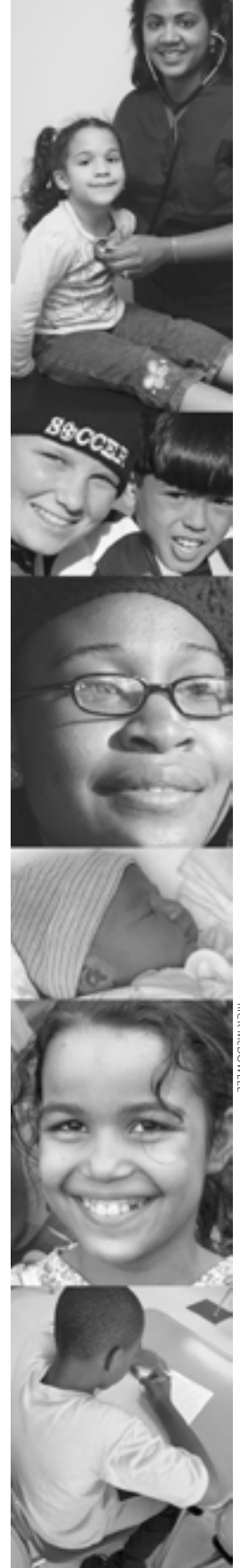
Families USA: <http://www.familiesusa.org/issues/medicaid/medicaid-action/>

By NETWORK Lobby Associates Elena Lacayo and Morgan Gregson

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