

***Covering Kids* Second Annual Meeting
Nashville, Tennessee
September 26, 2000**

**Sarah Shuptrine's Remarks
Director, *Covering Kids* National Program Office
President/CEO, Southern Institute on Children and Families**

Good morning! Our thanks again to Dr. Lew Sandy of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for giving us a great kick-off to the Second *Covering Kids* Annual Meeting.

We have planned a great program for you. We've managed to lasso some national experts. There are several panels on topics of interest to you, breakout sessions and special communications programming.

The schedule of events still leaves you with time to visit the exhibit hall again, where each *Covering Kids* project has been invited to display materials and information. It is truly inspiring to see all of the materials and videos and to witness the creativity that abounds with *Covering Kids* partnerships across the country.

I want to express special appreciation to the *Covering Kids* grantee advisors who helped us develop the Annual Meeting program topics.

- Kim Bell - DC
- Julia Costich - Kentucky
- Mary Figg - Florida
- Josh Greenberg - Massachusetts
- Kimberley Imperiale - Colorado
- Gabrielle Lessard - Idaho
- Barbara Luksch - Hawaii
- Dorothy Stamper - Rhode Island
- Rachelle Weight - Nebraska

We are also grateful to all of the program participants who will, throughout the next three days, provide information to make you even smarter and will strengthen your resolve to see that every uninsured child who is eligible for Medicaid and SCHIP is informed of coverage and provided assistance to enroll and renew their coverage.

Much of the program this year is devoted to hearing from *Covering Kids* state and pilot representatives about the initiatives they have underway, the successes they are experiencing and the issues they are encountering. Learning is a BIG part of our responsibility in *Covering Kids*, and applying what we learn is an even greater responsibility.

There are now *Covering Kids* initiatives in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and 173 *Covering Kids* pilot communities. You and the organizations you are collaborating with are making progress toward the implementation of effective outreach, simplification of the application and redetermination processes, and coordination across child health coverage programs.

You are clearly making a difference in helping to shape new policies and procedures and developing solid partnerships and new approaches to reaching out to families with uninsured children.

Across the country, Covering Kids initiatives are out in force focusing on specific populations and outreach venues. Allow me to summarize some of the activities you are involved with in your states and communities:

- 28 statewide projects and 50 pilot projects are conducting organized outreach to businesses.
- 27 statewide projects and 60 pilot projects are utilizing community-based organizations to conduct training for outreach and enrollment.
- 19 statewide projects and 31 pilot projects are utilizing door-to-door outreach strategies.
- 9 statewide projects and 11 pilot projects are utilizing some form of electronic application (AK, KY, CO, IN, CA, HI, MO, NH, and VA).
- 13 statewide initiatives and 26 pilot projects are conducting targeted outreach through the faith community.
- 11 statewide projects and 5 pilot projects are utilizing incentive payments to bolster applications.
- 12 statewide projects and 45 pilot projects are conducting targeted outreach through providers.
- 34 statewide projects and 74 pilot projects are conducting organized outreach initiatives through schools.

Some projects are reaching out through child care providers, temporary employment agencies, sports associations, housing authorities and immunization registries.

With regard to special or vulnerable populations, many Covering Kids initiatives are conducting focused target population outreach. For example:

- 14 states and 22 pilots are focusing outreach on adolescents.
- 16 statewide projects and 21 pilot projects are focusing outreach specifically on Latino/Hispanic families.
- 6 states and 8 pilots are focusing outreach toward migrant families.
- 10 statewide projects and 10 pilot projects are focusing outreach on Native American families.
- 15 states and 26 pilots are conducting outreach targeting rural/frontier populations.

In addition, many statewide projects are targeting a variety of other populations, including homeless families, former TANF families, immigrant families, WIC participants and ranching or farmworker communities.

This year has seen the addition of two major Covering Kids related initiatives funded by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The need to dig deeper into the complex issues surrounding retention of coverage led to the announcement in February 2000 of a new national program, Supporting Families After Welfare Reform: Access to Medicaid, SCHIP and Food Stamps. The \$6.8 million program is a partnership of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The Supporting Families program will provide states and large counties with resources and technical assistance to diagnose their eligibility and redetermination systems for adults and children, to identify significant opportunities for improvement and to implement solutions. Seventeen (17) states and one county submitted applications, fourteen (14) were selected for site visits and announcements are expected throughout the fall. The Southern Institute is pleased to have been selected by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to be the National Program Office for this important new initiative. Leadership for the Supporting Families project will be provided by Michael Rothman at the Foundation and Vicki Grant at the Southern Institute.

A major enhancement to Covering Kids is the communications and marketing initiative announced in April by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Identifying effective and creative ways to get the word out to families that child health coverage opportunities are available through Medicaid and SCHIP is essential, but Covering Kids wanted to do everything it could to see that, when the word went out, the eligibility process did not serve as a barrier to enrollment. Early simplification efforts focused solely on shortening applications. That was a good goal, but it wasn't enough. Policy simplification was central.

State governments, the federal government, Covering Kids initiatives and others have made strides toward a more family friendly eligibility process, and the time was right to make the move on the marketing front. The Covering Kids marketing and communications campaign is led by Annie Burns, Senior Partner with Greer, Margolis, Mitchell, Burns and Associates, the social marketing firm that produced the excellent Covering Kids video last year. And Stuart Schear at The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation provides the overall guidance for this important initiative.

During the upcoming year, we will continue to work on these issues and to place strong emphasis on the importance of public and private partnerships because that's how we will get the job done. And, to foster multi-state collaboration around strategies, we plan to provide more opportunities for information-sharing and brainstorming.

We will also be offering more opportunities for technical assistance to help you and your collaborative partners tackle issues related to retention and renewal, continuous eligibility, Medicaid/SCHIP coordination, improving customer services, taking advantage of the new school lunch opportunities to coordinate with child health coverage programs and moving into the future with innovations such as electronic applications. We are pleased to welcome Donna Cohen Ross and Jocelyn Guyer of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities as part of our Technical Assistance team.

And with the addition of the Greer, Margolis, Mitchell, Burns and Associates communications team, we will be able to provide you with the kind of social marketing expertise that we know will enhance your efforts to reach families, community and business leaders and to become more adept in working with the media.

So my best advice is to tighten that seat belt you were wearing as we blasted off last year because the pace and expectations are going to be at high levels for 2001!