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Minnesota Coalition for Kids Health Coverage Launches HealthyKidsMN.org
Web Site Will Connect Families with Uninsured Children to Non-Profit Agencies Assisting with Enrollment into State-Sponsored Health Coverage Programs

ST. PAUL, MN (March 16, 2010) – The Minnesota Coalition for Kids Health Coverage today announced the launch of HealthyKidsMN.org, a statewide resource that aims to connect families with uninsured children to non-profit agencies that can assist them with eligibility requirements and enrollment into state-sponsored health care coverage options. The launch coincides with Cover the Uninsured Week, an annual observance sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Coalition’s work is funded in part by a two-year grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Coalition partners include St. Paul-based Portico Healthnet, Duluth-based Generations Health Care Initiatives, Rochester-based Olmsted County Community Action Partnership and St. Cloud Area Legal Services. Each of Minnesota’s eighty-seven counties will be served by one of these partners.

“One of the biggest challenges our Coalition faces is getting the message out that, even if you work, your uninsured children may still qualify for free or reduced-cost health coverage from the state,” said Debra Holmgren, executive director of lead Coalition partner Portico Healthnet. “The locally based non-profit partners in this effort will walk families through the complicated eligibility criteria based on their own individual circumstances, and will even assist with the application process itself if desired. These services are all provided free of charge as part of this grant-supported initiative.” Portico is serving the Twin Cities metro area, as well as areas of the state not served by one of the Coalition’s other local partners.

Generations Health Care Initiatives is working with the Lake Superior Community Health Center’s Health Care Access Office in serving the northeastern section of the state. “Northeastern Minnesota has the highest percentage of uninsured children in the state,” said Peggy Ostman, Generations’ health coverage outreach coordinator. “We’re very committed to reaching those families, and enrolling as many of our region’s uninsured children as possible into the Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare programs.”

St. Cloud Area Legal Services (SCALS) is serving much of central Minnesota. “We’ll be leveraging our existing partnerships with community agencies throughout our nineteen-county service area,” said Ralonda Mason, SCALS supervising attorney and agency project lead for the Coalition. “We have a long history of working with migrants, at-risk teens, the homeless, and Native Americans in our area, and we’re excited to be able to increase our efforts at covering uninsured children within these populations in particular.”

Olmsted County Community Action Partnership (CAP) is working with Rochester-based Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association to serve individuals in Olmsted County. “Our program works to match available resources with local needs,” said Linda Bradford, Olmsted County CAP Program Director. “We’re grateful for the increased focus on serving families with uninsured children that our partnership with the Coalition is making possible.”

Visitors to HealthyKidsMN.org can find contact information for the agency serving their area by clicking their

county on the “How We Can Help” page. The site also contains a wealth of easy-to-understand information, presented in English and Spanish, on Minnesota’s various subsidized health coverage options. Calls to agency partners can be conducted in a variety of languages, including English, Spanish, Somali, Hmong and French.

In addition to the HealthyKidsMN.org Web site, the activities of the Minnesota Coalition for Kids Health Coverage are being promoted via public service announcements on local and statewide television stations and on English, Spanish and Somali radio stations.

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About the Minnesota Coalition for Kids Health Coverage

The Minnesota Coalition for Kids Health Coverage works to identify and enroll uninsured children into Minnesota’s Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare health coverage safety net programs. The Coalition is a collaboration between St. Paul-based Portico Healthnet, Duluth-based Generations Health Care Initiatives, St. Cloud Area Legal Services and Olmsted County Community Action Partnership. The Coalition is supported in part by a Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA) grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For more information on the Minnesota Coalition for Kids Health Coverage, contact Bill Gray at Portico Healthnet (651-603-5100).