



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
Karen E. Timberlake, Secretary

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CONTACT: Stephanie Smiley, (608) 267-6773

Evaluation Shows BadgerCare Plus Improves Access to Health Insurance for Wisconsin Children

Preliminary findings from an evaluation performed by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute indicate BadgerCare Plus has been highly effective in improving access to health insurance for Wisconsin's children and enrolling poor and near-poor children.

"This study is yet another indication that the BadgerCare Plus expansion has been a great success. More children and their families are covered and able to obtain the health care that they need simply by making the program easier to apply for and stay enrolled in," said Department of Health Services' Secretary Karen Timberlake. "We've been working very hard with our partners and providers to get the word out about the program and to help people sign up, so to have confirmation that we are reaching communities of highest need is something we're really proud of."

Secretary Timberlake attributes the dramatic increase in enrollment to a combination of factors including: an initial automated search for eligible children, parents, and caregivers on other public programs; simplified and expanded categories for eligibility; aggressive outreach which included branding the program as available coverage for "all kids"; and using community-based groups to help identify and enroll eligible individuals. The effects of the recent downturn in the economy have led to decreasing access to private coverage, which may also have increased participation in the program.

Key findings from the study, led by Principal Investigator and UW health care economist Dr. Thomas DeLeire, include the following:

- The total enrollment of children, parents and caregiver relatives increased 34 percent from 440,000 in December 2007 to 590,000 in September 2008.
- The increase included more than 57,000 adults and more than 92,000 children.
- Children in families earning \$26,400 per year or less (under 150 percent of the federal poverty level) account for almost two-thirds of the increase in child enrollments.
- The rates of enrollment as a percentage of the total child population in Wisconsin are very high among poor and near poor children.
- The proportion of all children enrolled in Medicaid programs increased from 21 percent prior to the launch of BadgerCare Plus to 27 percent as of September 2008.

BadgerCare Plus also appears to be improving continuity of health care coverage. Early findings suggest a substantial reduction in the number of people leaving BadgerCare Plus with program exits falling from roughly 5 percent to about 3 percent and roughly 7 percent to about 4 percent per month for adults. Churning, defined in the study as leaving the program and re-entering within a three-month period, also fell by about one-fifth.

For more information on BadgerCare Plus, visit: www.badgercareplus.org

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