

Medical Care For Kids, No Questions Asked

CBS Evening News: Children's Health Fund Delivers Free, Mobile Care To Children

DETROIT, April 25, 2009 | by Seth Doane



A Detroit child gets a dental checkup at a mobile clinic, part of the Children Can't Wait medical campaign, which provides free care - no questions asked - for anyone under 18 that needs it. (CBS)



A child receives free medical care in Detroit April 25, 2009. Children's Health Fund is using mobile clinics to provide care to children in need, especially those who may have lost health coverage after one or both of their parents was laid off due to the recession. (CBS)

(CBS) In the shadow of the Renaissance Center, far from a renaissance, Detroit is in crisis

Unemployment stands at 14 percent, nearly double the national rate. The poverty rate is over 33 percent, the highest of any large city. More than half the city's children live in poverty. And there's just one doctor for every 1,100 children, half the figure for Michigan as a whole.

Which is why a national health campaign kicked off here today, as CBS news correspondent Seth Doane reports.

The premise of the Children's Health Fund's Kids Can't Wait campaign is simple. The national, non-profit medical program is set up to serve anyone 18 years of age or younger. There are no prerequisites. The only qualification is that someone needs medical care - no questions asked.

It's an elaborate, high-tech version of an old-fashioned doctor's house call. Only here, it's about 100 doctors, dentists, and assistants and all of the care is free of charge.

As many as 2,000 children lose their health insurance every day as parents lose their jobs.

Parents like Jeffery White.

"When the recession came, it took the jobs away," he said, "and it took the medical insurance away.

That meant regular checkups for son Edwin were gone too.

"He saw a dentist when he was in elementary," White said of Edwin. "That's a long time ago." Edwin is 17 now.

It's a familiar story for as many as 100,000 kids in Michigan that do not have medical insurance

"It's one thing after the other that is piling on," said Dr. Irwin Redlener, president and co-founder of the [Children's Health Fund](#). "And at the end of the day, children are not getting the healthcare they need."

So, Dr. Redlener's group partnered with Children's Hospital of Michigan in the first component of what will be a national effort to bring mobile medical clinics -- complete the same tools available in a regular exam room - to kids in need.

"Early examination is very important," said Dr. Jim Stenger, a dentist at the Children's Health Fund's mobile center, because small problems can turn into big ones if they aren't caught early.

The program is meant to be a first-step to help some of the 10 million children nationwide that do not have easy access to medical care - like Cornelia Isaac's grandkids, here to see a doctor:

With all the different costs involved with raising the kids, medical care, "Well, you know, a lot of times - that goes lacking," Isaac said.

It's the lack of care at an early age that, in the future, will only compound the consequences and the costs. Those costs are not just financial. They can include the academic cost of losing class time as well.

Today more than 150 kids and teenagers were treated and the mobile center hopes to see many more tomorrow.

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