



# Covering Kids & Families

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Wisconsin

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## 2008 Back to School Campaign Highlights

### Milwaukee Health Fair

On Aug. 15, the Milwaukee Health Department held its annual Back to School Health Fair at South Division High School. Five thousand families attended the event which provided free school supplies, health care checks, shots for school, insurance information, and dental screenings!



### Outreach in River Valley School District

Each year, a River Valley School District Social Worker distributes school supplies to families who call and request them. This year, when families called to arrange a time to pick up supplies, they were asked whether anyone in the household was uninsured. Those who indicated that they or someone in their home was uninsured were offered private enrollment assistance at the same time they picked up their school supplies.

- 51 families were asked about health insurance
- Seven families requested enrollment assistance
- Two families completed FoodShare applications
- One BadgerCare Plus application was completed
- One family did not qualify for any assistance
- One family, who did not have an appointment, completed the "Am I Eligible" screener

This is a great example of a quick and easy way to incorporate BadgerCare Plus outreach into an existing school process!

### Application Assistance at Madison Schools

This year, the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD), the South Madison Health and Family Center-Harambee, and CKF teamed up to identify uninsured children in Madison schools and help them get health care coverage. A wide range of community partners were available on Aug. 21 to answer questions about BadgerCare Plus (BC+) and to enroll eligible families at 16 of the 31 elementary schools during school registration. These schools were chosen because they have the highest percentage of free and reduced price lunch recipients in the district.

Parents had an opportunity to do a quick 10-minute screening to see if their family is eligible for BadgerCare Plus. Parents were also able to enroll their children/family in BadgerCare Plus. Outreach specialists helped walk families through the screenings and applications using the website [access.wi.gov](http://access.wi.gov).

Aug. 21 Data Highlights:

- 14 BC+ applications were completed
- 51 families were determined eligible for BC+
- 62 families will get follow-up either to complete a full application or to get answers to specific questions

### Dane County BadgerCare Plus Press Conference

School and health officials held a news conference at Lincoln Elementary School in Madison encouraging parents with uninsured kids to explore options for high-quality, affordable health care. Speakers included Jennifer Lord (Executive Director, Harambee); Daniel Nerad (Superintendent of Schools, MMSD); Arlene Silveira (Board of Education President, MMSD); Michael Jacob (Project Coordinator, CKF); Secretary Karen Timberlake (WI Department of Health Services); and Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin (U.S. Representative).



# Birth Cost Recovery

Medicaid is a partnership between the state and federal government to provide health care coverage to certain populations. Generally, Medicaid provides health coverage for categories of individuals such as low-income children and families and people with disabilities. Medicaid will cover the birth and delivery costs for most low-income pregnant women. However, there is a catch. Wisconsin state law requires that unmarried fathers pay the “lying-in” or birth costs of newborns. Therefore if a father is not married to the baby’s mother, the State will pursue legal action to require the father to pay for the birth costs.

The legal process starts by Medicaid referring the father to the local child support agency (CSA). If the father has not already acknowledged his paternity, the CSA will start a paternity case against him. If the father has acknowledged the paternity of the baby, the CSA will start a child support case against him, and may order him to pay some or all of the Medicaid-paid birth costs. In this situation, the State is partaking in “birth cost recovery” from the father.

Whether the father signs a “stipulation” ahead of time with the child support office or appears in court later, the amount of his birth cost recovery obligation will be set in a court order for child support. Complicating matters, the amount each father may be ordered to pay will vary, as the amount depends on the following factors:

- The county in which the child was born
- The involvement of a health maintenance organization or fee-for-service provider
- The type of delivery (C-Section or not)
- The birth of multiples
- The amount paid by any other insurance



Currently in Wisconsin, each county has their own maximum-allowable charge. In some Wisconsin counties, fathers are charged relatively high birth amounts that may not be affordable, raising issues of fairness and equity.

Please note: While there are few process protections for unmarried fathers, there are a couple of situations where birth cost recovery should not be ordered:

1. Child Support Agencies may not seek birth cost orders for fathers to repay medical assistance benefits if all of the following apply: The parents have an older child in common, the parents live together at the time the child is born, and the intact family situation has been reported to the economic support agency and is documented in their automated case system prior to the child’s birth.
2. Most families in the BadgerCare Plus Benchmark Plan will NOT be referred to Child Support for services.

## New Changes Proposed

The State of Wisconsin is proposing to amend the rules relating to the establishment of birth cost orders based on child support guidelines, attempting to make it more equitable. The proposed birth cost recovery rules will follow the standard that the courts use in determining a child support obligation. This standard acknowledges a father’s income and ability to pay, and is based upon a percentage of the gross income and assets of either or both parents.

### Pro

- The proposal introduces obligation-scaling procedures that more equitably take a father’s ability to pay into account.

### Cons

- Even with the change, some birthing costs will continue to be added to the order of low-income fathers who cannot pay now and may not be able to pay later, it will increase the amount of unpaid debt owed by parents, deterring employment, reducing collection rates (performance rates) and incentive payments, and increasing administrative costs (in order to work on unsuccessful cases).

**Continued on page 4**

## A Fond Farewell

We would like to take a moment to say farewell to **Jeff Burkhart**. Jeff was the Outreach Coordinator for the Department of Health Services (DHS) and was responsible for establishing partnerships and equipping organizations with the skills to help eligible Wisconsinites apply for BadgerCare Plus and FoodShare. In some areas of the state he did broad-based outreach such as distributing marketing materials, while in other regions more detailed information was shared, such as an ACCESS training. Marketing through the media was also a priority. Jeff, along with Wisconsin Public Television, put together radio and TV ads.

CKF Staff had the opportunity recently to talk with Jeff about his accomplishments while at DHS. He said he was proud of the great network of community organizations that has been built and the increased impact of BadgerCare Plus. This was all made possible by working with hospitals and community based organizations throughout the state to spread the word about Wisconsin's public health insurance program. Jeff is also excited that BadgerCare Plus enrollment has increased by more than 85,000 in the first six months of the program! Modest as he is, Jeff was quick to mention that he cannot take credit for the success of BadgerCare Plus, but with the formation of so many community partnerships, eligible families are learning how to fully utilize the program.

We wish Jeff well as he continues his career as the Executive Director for the Literacy Network in Dane County.

## Critical Condition

With support from the University of Wisconsin – Extension and the Program Innovation Fund, Covering Kids & Families has partnered with Wisconsin Public Television to present the film “Critical Condition” to communities around the state. This film puts a human face on the nation's growing health care crisis by capturing the harrowing struggles of four critically ill Americans who discover that being uninsured

**What happens if you fall ill and are one of the 47 million Americans without health insurance?**



Photo credit: Jillann Spitzmiller

**CRITICAL CONDITION**

can cost them their jobs, health, home, savings, and even their lives. Filmed in verité style, “Critical Condition” offers a moving and invaluable exposé at a time when the nation is debating how to extend health insurance to all Americans. The kick-off screening was held in Madison on Sep. 16. To find out when there will be a screening in your neck of the woods call Allison Espeseth at 608-261-1455. “Critical Condition” airs Tuesday, Sep. 30 at 8 p.m. on Wisconsin Public Television.



## Co-Chair Corner | Outreach!

By Andy Heidt & Kathy Kaelin, CKF co-chairs



This year, as kids were returning to school, we again held our annual Back to School Campaign. We use this time to encourage parents to explore BadgerCare Plus as a health care coverage option for their families, if eligible. Our coalition members held back to school events all around the state (see page 1 for several examples). As kids and parents settle into the school year our work will continue with an increased emphasis on media events and other public outreach.

Since the inception of BadgerCare Plus on Feb. 1, more than 85,000 children, caretakers, and pregnant woman have enrolled in the program! As we celebrate this success we also continue to think of new ways to reach the thousands of individuals in our state who remain uninsured.


This year the CHILD Project is in 14 school districts throughout Wisconsin: Abbotsford, Amery, Bangor, Clayton, D.C. Everest, Holmen, La Crosse, Madison, Milwaukee, Onalaska, River Valley, Spencer, Sun Prairie and West Allis-West Milwaukee. As the year progresses we will continue to spread the word about the availability of BadgerCare Plus by including articles in newsletters, posting information on district websites, and providing brochures at parent-teacher conferences, to name a few examples. For more information about the CHILD Project visit [www.ckfwi.org/child.htm](http://www.ckfwi.org/child.htm).

At CKF we continue to work toward our goal of health insurance coverage for all children and adults in Wisconsin!

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## Staff Introduction: Meet Erin Mader



Erin Mader joined CKF in September 2008 as a Graduate Student Project Assistant. She is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Public Health at UW-Madison. Erin brings knowledge of medical assistance programs and policies, as she worked for Dane County Human Services as a caseworker prior to joining CKF. Her work experience also includes providing statewide housing counseling at the Tenant Resource Center and serving as a Family Outreach Worker for Dane County Parent Council Head Start. Erin's experiences lie in case management, assisting clients in understanding complex policies and systems, and in networking with community organizations. Her bachelor's degree is in French with minors in Spanish and English. At CKF she will lead the dissemination of the Making-A-Plan brochure, support and plan for the Connecting Health Insurance to Lunch Data (CHILD) Project, and enhance Public Policy work.

## SAVE THE DATE!

### For CKF's State Coalition Meeting

This year's Covering Kids & Families State Coalition Meeting will be held on Tuesday, **Nov. 18** in Madison. A main agenda item for this year's meeting will be the BadgerCare Plus childless adult expansion.

More details will be coming soon. If you have immediate questions, please contact Jeni Appleby, [jlbingen@wisc.edu](mailto:jlbingen@wisc.edu).

### Birth Cost Recovery article continued from page 2

- Generally speaking, the rule fails to recognize two-parent, unmarried families. Ordering birth cost recovery on those households takes money out of the baby's household.
- The change appears to pave the way for income tax agencies to redirect birth cost money from fathers who had been determined too low income to be ordered by the court to begin repayment. (This is referred to as "Tax Intercept," and the change does permit a father to contest this method of recovery, but he must take legal action to make this happen.)

We'd like to thank Advocacy and Benefits Counseling for Health, Inc. (ABC for Health) for their help with interpreting this issue. ABC for Health, Inc. is a Wisconsin-based nonprofit public interest law firm dedicated to ensuring health care access for children and families, particularly those with special needs or who are at risk.

While still controversial, national policy trends have been against recovering birth costs at all. ABC for Health, Inc. maintains that the proposed rule will introduce equity into the process, but as a whole, birth cost recovery is a counter-productive means of supporting children and families.