



CHECKUP ON KIDS: IDAHO KIDS COVERED DAY OF ACTION

Idaho's health system has experienced a rollercoaster of challenges over the past two years. As Idaho recovers from the impacts of the pandemic, it's important we checkup on kids, review the latest information on children's health care trends and identify opportunities to support the growth of healthy kids in Idaho.

Well-Child Checkups & Access to Care

Access to well-child checkups and other routine health care services are essential for children to grow up healthy and developmentally on track. While providers have been working around the clock to care for patients, the pandemic strained resources and caused delays in routine medical care for children. Children are missing opportunities for early detection of developmental delays, chronic diseases or mental illness and falling behind on routine immunizations.

- Idaho ranks last in the nation for pediatricians per capita, with 170 pediatric primary care doctors available to Idaho's 450,000 children.
- Nationally, pediatric visits decreased by nearly 25 percent over the last year.¹
- Last year, the administration of childhood vaccines nationwide was about 12 million doses lower than expected.²



Children's Mental Health Should be a Priority

The social, emotional and economic challenges of the pandemic have taken a toll on the mental health of Idaho families and youth. Even with providers working around the clock to help treat mental health challenges, children are facing significant backlogs when they try to seek care.

- Nearly one in five Idaho teens experienced major depression over the last year, and two out of three teens experiencing depression did not receive any mental health services or treatment.³
- In some parts of the state, families are waiting months to get behavioral health treatment for their children.



Consistent Coverage and Access to Care is Key to Get Kids Back on Track

When children are uninsured, they are more likely to have unmet health needs, including missed well-child checkups and unfilled prescriptions. Keeping kids consistently enrolled in private health coverage or Medicaid is crucial to ensuring their health stability.

- Before the pandemic, nearly 24,000 Idaho kids were uninsured.
- During the pandemic, federal COVID-19 emergency protections were put in place to prevent Medicaid participants from being unenrolled. Many of these emergency protections are expected to expire this year.
- Families will need to complete renewal paperwork for their children to remain on Medicaid. If the state's renewal processes are unable to handle the influx of renewals or if parents cannot be reached to complete paperwork within a short timeline, tens of thousands of Idaho kids will be at risk of losing health coverage.



Idaho Kids Covered Recommendations: Let's Make Children's Health a Top Policy Priority

Ensuring consistent health coverage and reliable access to care is essential in meeting our children's medical and mental health needs. As the state moves forward into this next phase of the pandemic and pandemic recovery, lawmakers must **checkup on kids** and prioritize getting Idaho children on track towards the health future they deserve. Idaho Kids Covered recommends the following steps be implemented over the coming year.

1. Idaho lawmakers can take advantage of available federal relief dollars to make investments in children's mental and behavioral health care before the funding expires.
2. Idaho officials can extend timelines for Medicaid renewals once the emergency protections expire and allow families more time to respond to receive alerts and submit needed paperwork.
3. The health system can invest in robust outreach and enrollment and strong consumer support in preparation for the end of the Medicaid emergency protections. The state can routinely track and release renewal data and intervene quickly if children begin losing coverage at high rates in the coming year.
4. Idaho lawmakers can reduce the number of uninsured children in the state by increasing income eligibility for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to the national average.

¹The Commonwealth Fund, 2021. While Sick Visits to Pediatric Practices Decline, Mental Health Visits Rise. <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/2021/mar/while-sick-visits-pediatric-practices-decline-mental-health-visits-rise>

²Georgetown Center for Children and Families & American Academy of Pediatrics, 2021. Urgent Action Needed to Catch Up on Routine Childhood Vaccinations. <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Kids-and-Vaccines-v4.pdf>

³Mental Health America, 2022. Youth Mental Health Data. <https://www.mhanational.org/issues/2022/mental-health-america-youth-data>